SERMON

Preached at the

FUNERAL

Of the Right Honourable

JOHN

EARL OF

ROCHESTER,

Who died at *Woodstock-Park*, *July* 26. 1680. and was buried at *Spilsbury* in *Oxford-shire*, Aug. 9.

By *Robert Parsons* M. A. Chaplain to the Right Honourable ANNE *Countess-Dowager* of ROCHESTER.

DUBLIN,

Printed by *Benjamin Took* and *John Crook*, Printers to the King's most Excellent Majesty; and are to be sold by *Mary Crook* at His Majesties Printing-House in *Skinner-Row*. 1681.

To the Right Honourable

ANNE, *and* ELIZABETH,

DOWAGER-COUNTESSES of

ROCHESTER,

Right Honourable,

YOur Ladiſhips, or any elſe, cannot think meaner of this performance than I my ſelf do; for beſides the great hurry and diſorder that I was in upon the loſs of ſuch a Patron as my Lord, I am ſufficiently conſcious how unfit I am to appear in public, eſpecially upon ſuch a nice and great Subject. As his Lordſhips particular Commands brought me to the Pulpit, ſo Yours only have brought me to the preſs. And therefore I hope, whatever uſage the following Diſcourſe may meet with abroad; I ſhall always find a ſhelter in your Ladiſhips Favours: and the rather, becauſe you can, both of you, largely atteſt the truth

of most of the remarkable Occurrences that I have taken n
tice of during his Lordships penitential sickness, I sha
adde nothing more, but wish You may never forget the good
ness of Almighty God, who (through this whole melancho
ly Scene) has signalized his good providences to You both
and that You may ev r live under the special protection
thereof, is the constant prayer of

Your HONOURS

Most Faithful and most
obedient humble Servant,

Adderbury, *Aug.* 30.
1680.

ROBERT PARSONS.

St. LUKE 15. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninetie and nine just persons that need no repentance.

IF ever there were a subject that might deserve and exhaust all the treasures of religious eloquence in the description of so great a man, and so great a sinner as now lies before us; together with the wonders of the Divine goodness, in making him so great a Penitent; I think the present occasion affords one as remarkable as any place or age can produce.

Indeed so great and full of matter it is, that tis too big to come out of my mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The greatness of his parts are well enough known, and of his Sins too well in the world; and neither my capacity, nor experience for my profession will allow me to be so proper a judge, either of the one or the other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad Spectator, and a secret mourner for his sins; so has he at last graciously heard the prayers of his nearest Relations and true Friends, for his conversion and repentance; and tis the good tidings of that especially, what God has done for his soul, that I am now to *publish and tell abroad to the world*, not only by the obligations of mine Office, in which *I* had the honour to be a weak Minister to it, but by his own express and dying commands.

Now although, to describe this worthily, would require a wit equal to that with which he lived, and a devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either will be a very hard task; yet besides that *I* am not sufficient for these things, (for who is?) and that my thoughts have been rather privately busied to secure a real repentance to himself, whilst living; than to publish it abroad to others in artificial dress after he is dead; I say, besides all this, I think I shall have less need to call in the aids of secular eloquence. The proper habit of Repentance is not fine linnen, or any delicate array, such as are used in the Court or Kings houses, but *Sackcloath* and *Ashes*: And the way which God Almighty takes to convey it, *is not by the words of mans wisdome*, but by the plainness of his written Word, assisted by the Inward power and *demonstration of the Spirit*: and the effects it works, and by which it discovers it self, are not any raptures of wit and fancy, but the most humble prostrations both of soul and spirit, and the captivating all humane imaginations to the obedience of a despised Religion, and a crucified Saviour.

And tis in this array I intend to bring out this Penitent to you; an array which I am sure he more valued, and desired to appear in, both to God and the World, than in all the triumphs of Wit and Gallantry. And therefore (waving all these Rhetorical flourishes, as beneath the solemnity of the occasion, and the majesty of that great and weighty Truth I am now to deliver) I shall content my self with the office of a plain Historian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I saw and heard; especially during his penitential sorrows; which if all that heard me this day, had been spectators of, there would then have been no need of a Sermon to convince men, but every man would have been as much a Preacher to himself of this truth, as I am, except these sorrows: And yet even these sorrows should be turn'd into joys too, if we would only do what we pray for, that the *will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven*: for so our Blessed Lord assures

us; *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*, t
From which I shall consider,

1. The Sinner particularly that is before us.

2. The Repentance of this Sinner, together with the means, the time, and all pro
ble sincerity of it.

3. The joy that is in heaven, and should be on earth, for the repentance of this Sinn

4. The comparitive greatness and preeminence of this joy, on the account of this e
ample, that is, and should be for the repentance of this Sinner, more then for the c
stant and uniforme virtuousness of any good liver; which will naturally lead me to

Fifth and last particular, to a special address or application to all that hear me; th
they would all joyn in this joy, in praise and thanksgiving to God for the conversion
this Sinner; and if there be any that have been like him in their sins, that they wou
also speedily imitate him in their repentance.

And first, let us consider the person before us, as he certainly was, a great Sinn
But because man was upright before he was a sinner, and to measure the greatness
his fall, it will be necessary to take a view of that height from which he fell; give
leave to go back a little to look into the rock from which he was hewn, the Quali
Familie, Education, and personal accomplishments of this Great man. In doing of wh
I think no man will charge me with any design of customary flattery, or formality; sin
I intend only thereby to shew the greatness and unhappiness of his folly, in the perv
ting so many excellent abilities and advantages for virtue and piety into the service
sin, and so becoming a more universal, insinuating, and prevailing example of it.

As for his Family, on both sides, from which he was descended, they were so
of the most famous in their generations. His Granfather was that Excellent and t
ly great man, *Charles* Lord *Wilmot*, Viscount *Athlone* in *Ireland*. *Henry* his Fath
who inherited the same Title and Greatness, was by His late Majesty King *CHARL*
the I. created Baron of *Adderbury* in *Oxfordshire*, and by his present Majesty Earl of
chester. He was a man of signal Loyalty and integrity indeed; and of such Coura
and Conduct in Military affairs as became a great General, But my endeavours
this kind are superseded, tho I had time, by my want of abilities to declare it worth
ly, as well as by the notoriety of these severals; and that person must be very ignora
of the late Transactions in the three Kingdoms, and the misfortunes of our prese
King, who understands not the service and value of that eminent Subject. His M
ther (of whom I might speak great and worthy things, were it not that I avoid t
imputation of flattery) was the Relict of Sir *Francis Henry Lee* of *Ditchly* in the Coun
of *Oxford* Baronet, Grandmother to the present Right Honourable Earl of *Litchfiel*
and the Daughter of that Genenerous and Honourable Gentleman Sir *John St. Joh*
of *Lyddiard* in the County of *Wilts* Baronet, whose Family was so remarkable for lo
alty, that several of his Sons willingly offer'd themselves in the day of battel, and d
ed for it; and whilst the memory of the *English* or *Irish* Rebellion lasts, that Fami
cannot want a due veneration in the minds of any person, that loves God or the Kin

As for his Education, it was in *Wadham* College in *Oxford*, under the care of th
wise and Excellent Governour Dr. *Blanford*, the late Right Reverend Bishop of *Wo*
cester; there it was that he laid a good foundation of learning and study, though h
upon that foundation hay and stubble. There he first suck'd from th

ich afterwards by his own corrupt ſtomach, or ſome ill juices after, were turn'd into poiſon to himſelf and others: which certainly can be no more a blemiſh to thoſe Illuſtrious Seminaries of Piety and good learning, than a diſobedient Child is to a wiſe and virtuous Father, or the fall of Man to the excellency of Paradiſe.

His Quality I ſhall take no notice of, there being ſo much of what was excellent and extraordinary in this great perſon, that I have no room for any thing that is common to him with others.

A Wit he had ſo rare and fruitful in its invention, and withal ſo choice and delicate in its judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his compoſures to give a full anſwer to that queſtion, What & where Wit is? except the purity and choice of ſubject: for had ſuch excellent ſeeds but fallen upon good ground, and inſtead of pitching upon a Beaſt or a Luſt, been raiſed upon high, to celebrate the myſteries of the Divine love, in Pſalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual ſongs; I perſwade my ſelf we might by this time have receiv'd from his pen as excellent an Idea of Divine Poetry, under the Goſpel, uſeful to the teaching of vertue, eſpecially in this generation, as his prophane Verſes have been to deſtroy it. And I am confident, had God ſpared him a longer life, this would have been the whole buſineſs of it, as I know it was the vow and purpoſe of his ſickneſs.

His natural talent was excellent, but he had hugely improved it by Learning and Induſtry, being throughly acquainted with all Claſſick Authors, both Greek and Latin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him, amongſt thoſe of his quality. Which yet he uſed not, as other Poets have done, to tranſlate or ſteal from them, but rather to better and improve them by his own natural fancy. And whoever reads his Compoſures, will find all things in them ſo peculiarly great, new, and excellent, that he will eaſily pronounce, That tho he has lent to many others, yet he has borrowed of none; and that he has been as far from a ſordid imitation of thoſe before him, as he will be from being reach'd by thoſe that follow him.

His other perſonal accompliſhments in all the perfections of a Gentleman for the Court or the Country, whereof he was known by all men to be a very great Maſter, is no part of my buſineſs to diſcribe or underſtand; and whatever they were in themſelves, I am ſure they were but miſerable comforters to him, ſince they only miniſter'd to his ſins, and made his example the more fatal and dangerous; for ſo we may own, (nay I am obliged by him not to hide, but to ſhew the rocks which others may avoid) that he was once one of the *greateſt of ſinners*.

And truly none but one ſo great in parts could be ſo; as the chiefeſt of the Angels for knowledge and power became moſt degenerate. His ſins were like his parts, (for from them corrupted they ſprang) all of them high & extraordinary. He ſeem'd to affect ſomething ſingular and paradoxical in his Impieties, as well as in his Writings, above the reach and thoughts of other men; taking as much pains to draw others in, and to pervert the right ways of vertue, as the Apoſtles and Primitive Saints, *to ſave their own ſouls and them that heard them.* For this was the heightning and amazing circumſtance of his ſins, that he was ſo diligent and induſtrious to recommend and propagate them; not like thoſe of old that *hated the light*, but thoſe the Prophet mentions, *Iſ.* 3. 9. *who declare their ſins as Sodom; and hide it not*, that take it upon their

lytes to it, and Writing Panegyricks upon Vice; ſinging praiſes to the great enemy of God, and caſting down Coronets and Crowns before his Throne.

Nay ſo confirm'd was he in ſin, that he lived, and oftentimes almoſt died, a Martyr for it. God was pleaſed ſometimes to puniſh him with the effects of his folly, yet till now (he confeſſed) *they had no power to melt him into true repentance*; or if at any time he had ſome lucid intervals from his folly and madneſs, yet (alas) how ſhort and tranſitory were they? all that *goodneſs was but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew which vaniſhes away*; he ſtill return'd to the ſame exceſs of riot, and that with ſo much the more greedineſs, the longer he had faſted from it.

And yet even this deſperate Sinner, that one would think had made *a covenant with Death, and was at an agreement with Hell*, and juſt upon the brink of them both; God, to magnifie the riches of his grace and mercy, was pleaſed to ſnatch as a brand out of the fire. As St. *Paul* tho *before a blaſphemer, a perſecuter, and injurious*, yet *obtain'd mercy, that in him Chriſt Jeſus might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him to everlaſting life.* 1 *Tim.* 1. 13. 16. So God ſtruck him to the ground as it were by a light from heaven, and a voice of thunder round about him. Inſomuch that now the ſcales fall from his eyes, as they did from St. *Pauls*; his ſtony heart was open'd, and ſtreams of tears guſht out, the bitter but wholſome tears of true repentance.

And that this may appear to be ſo, I think it neceſſary to account for theſe three things.

1. For the means of it: that it was not barely the effect of ſickneſs, or the fear of death; but the hand of God alſo working in them and by them manifeſtly.

2. For the time of it: that though it was a death-bed repentance, and therefore full of danger, and the utmoſt hazard; yet it was not impoſſible to be true, nor abſolutely deſperate.

3. For the ſincerity of it: that what was thus poſſible to be good and true, probably was ſo; which though none but God that ſees the heart, can tell certainly, yet man even alſo may and ought to believe it; not only in the judgment of charity, but of moral juſtice, from all evident ſigns of it, which were poſſible to be given by one in his condition.

And firſt for the Means and method of it. That which prepared the way for it was a ſharp and painful ſickneſs, with which God was pleaſed to viſit him; the way which the Almighty often takes to reduce the wandering ſinner to the knowledge of God and of himſelf: *I will be unto Ephraim as a Lion, and as a young Lion unto the houſe of Judah; I even I will tear and go away, and none ſhall relieve him; I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and ſeek my face*; and *in their affliction they will ſeek me early.* *Hoſ.* 5. 14, 15.

And tho to forſake our ſins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, ſeems to be rather the effect of impotency and neceſſity, than of choice, and ſo not ſo acceptable or praiſe-worthy; yet we find God Almighty uſes the one to bring about the other; and improves a forced abſtinance from ſin, into a ſettl'd loathing and a true deteſtation of it: of which I ſhall give two noted inſtances. The firſt out of the Old Teſtament, in that famous caſe of *Manaſſeh*, 2 *Chron.* 33. (the neareſt parallel that I can [illegible] when *he did that which*

was evil in the ſight of the Lord, more then all the Kings of Judah before him, and had made Judah and all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem to erre, and do worſe then the Heathen whom the Lord had deſtroyed before them; yet we ſee God made uſe even of this way to reduce him to true repentance, for we read at the 11. *v.* of this Chapter: *Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the Captains of the hoſt of the King of Aſſyria, which took Manaſſeh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon*; and it follows in the next verſe, *When he was in affliction he beſought the Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him, and heard his ſupplication, and brought him again to Jeruſalem and unto his Kingdom; then Manaſſeh knew that the Lord was God*, v. 13 And the truth of his repentance, tho occaſioned firſt by his affliction, appeared afterwards by the following reformation which he wrought; for *he took away the ſtrange Gods*. v. 15.

The ſecond inſtance I ſhall give of a true, tho forced repentance, is in that well known caſe of the Prodigal Son, which follows my Text in this Chapter: tho *he had waſted all his ſubſtance with riotous living*, and was forced back to his fathers houſe only by extream hunger and neceſſity, yet he was joyfully received by him, for *his father ran & fell on his neck, and kiſſed him*, v. 20. and *the fatted calf* was killed for him; and when his elder brother was angry at it, the good father juſtifies his procedure, *v.* 32. *It was meet that we ſhould make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, was loſt and is found.*

And truly 'tis one good ſign, that God is now taking men into the number of his Children, when he is fixing upon them one of the grateſt badges and characters of them; for therefore ſaith the Apoſtle, *we are chaſtned of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world*; whilſt thoſe who are reſerv'd for deſtruction hereafter, do uſually in this life *come into no misfortune, nor are plagued like other men.* For God, *does not afflict any willingly, nor grieve the children of men*: but as he is grieved himſelf for the ſufferings of his children, (for *in all their affliction*, ſaith *the* Prophet, *he was afflicted*,) ſo he doth not uſually puniſh wicked men both here, and hereafter: and therefore they who are to be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction, God ſuffers to *enjoy their portion in this life* without diſturbance; And becauſe the days of *darkneſs* muſt be *many*, therefore does he ſuffer the *ſinner* many times to *die an hunderd years old*, that he may take his full ſwing of what he hath ſet his affections upon, and after a long and proſperous life here, without any check in his career of wickedneſs, he lets him drop down into hell, without the leaſt apprehenſion of danger. So that in that ſenſe it is true which the Poets ſay, when they tell us that the deſcent into Hell is eaſie and pleaſant.

And therefore on the contrary we may reaſonably preſume, that tribulation and anguiſh, when it is born with patience, & reſignation to God, and when it Works a ſerious Reformation, will certainly miniſter to us an entrance into everlaſting reſt, & that the greater our ſufferings have been, the more aboundant & much more grateful ſhall the reſt be.

Affliction, as it *riſes not out of the duſt*, but deſcends from that God, at whoſe hands we receive evil as well as good; ſo neither is it deſign'd to deject us thither, but raiſe us up to God from whence it ſelf comes. The pains of the Croſs, as well that Croſs which we muſt bear our ſelves, as that which our Saviour bore, do in ſome ſenſe open the Kingdom of heaven to all believers; and to ſome as the Penitent thief [illegible]

pleaſed to make equal to them who *have born the burden and heat of the day*; nay ofte times to give them more, for he *will love much, to whom much is forgiven.*

It is true, there are ſuch ſtubborn natures, that like clay are rather hardened by the fi of afflictions; ungratious children, that fly in the face of their heavenly Father in t very inſtant when he is correcting them; or, it may be, like th ſe children under t rod, who promiſe wonders then, and preſently after forget all. Such as th:ſe we ha deſcribed. *Pſ.* 78. 34. 35. 36. 37. *When he ſlew them, then they ſought him, and th return'd and enquired early after God; then they remember'd that God was their rock, and th the high God was their redeemer; nevertheleſs they did but flatter him with their mouth and lied unto him with their tongues, for their hearts was not right with him, neither contin they ſtedfaſt in his covenant.* And tis probable this has been the caſe formerly of this pe ſon. But there was an evident difference betwixt the effect of this ſickneſs upon hin and many others before: *He had other-ſentiments of things now*, (he told me) *and ac upon quite different principles*; he was not vext with it as it was painful, or hindr him from his ſins, which he would have *roll'd under his tongue* all the while, and long again to be at; but he *ſubmitted patiently to it; accepted it as the hand of God, and w thankful, bleſſing and praiſing God not only in, but for his extremities.* There were now curſing, no *railings* or *reproaches* to his ſervants, or thoſe about him, which in other ſick neſſes were their uſual entertainment, but he treated them with all the meekneſs an patience in the world, begging pardons frequently of the meaneſt of them but for a h ſty word, which the extremity of his ſickneſs and the ſharpneſs of his pain might eaſi force from him. His prayers were not ſo much for eaſe or health, or a continuance life; as for grace, and faith, and perfect reſignation to the will of God. So that I th we may not only charitably but juſtly conclude, that his ſickneſs was not the chief in gredient, but through the grace of God an effectual means of a true, tho late aepentanc

2. And for that I am to account in the next place, I mean the time of it; and to mak out to you, that tho it was a Death-bed repentance, and therefore full of danger an the utmoſt hazard, yet it was not wholly impoſſible to be true, nor abſolutely deſperat

That it was hugely dangerous, and of the utmoſt hazard to defer it ſo long, muſt nece be granted by all wiſe and conſidering men: I wiſh all men were ſo wiſe as ſeriouſly t conſider it, and provide for it.

For ſhould God have ſnatch'd him away in the very act of his ſin, and that, like and *Cozby*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, *Ananias* or *Sapphira*, he had gon down quick into hel yet we muſt have acknowledged, that *righteous art thou O Lord, and clear when thou judged.* If God had taken him from the Land of the living, either by ſome ſudden acc dent, by a raging Feaver, or by ſome ſtupid Lethurgy or Apoplexie, which he had had time for reflection or repentance; in what a dreadful condition had his ſoul been for ver? Or if God had vouchſafed him (as he did) ſome ſharp lingring ſickneſs, whe he might have had leiſure to repent; yet what aſſurance was there that ſuch a repen tance would have followed? or if it had, that it would have been accepted? Was it no more likely that he would ſtill have cried with the wiſe Wiſe man's ſluggard, *yet a litt ſleep, and a little ſlumber, till poverty* a diſmal poverty; *came upon him.*

But if he had reſolv'd at that time to break off his ſins by repentance, yet alas how im proper a time was that for it? Tis not eaſie to be preſent & conſiſtent to our ſelves, whe

decay and dulneſs of ſpirits, a ſhort memory, flat and low affections; & at the ſame time a more than ordinary hurry and ſurcharge of worldly buſineſs; a houſe to be ſet in order, children to be provided for in their fortunes and education; creditors to be ſatisfied, and all this amidſt the cries and mournings of our neareſt relations and friends about us. And certainly we muſt think repentance a very eaſie task, if we reckon ordinarily, that that is diſabled from all other things elſe, ſhall yet be fit to perfect and compleat it.

But allowing our thoughts to be as clear or clearer in our ſickneſs than in our calmeſt and ſtrongeſt ſeaſons, (which yet I think no man in his wits will believe) yet after all, what ſecurity have we that we ſhall be able to improve or imploy it to a true repentance? It may be, before we come to that, the meaſure of our iniquities is filled up already, & the irreverſible ſentence is gone out, tho not executed againſt us: my patience *ſhall not always ſtrive* (μὴ κατλμείνῃ, as the LXX) with men; *cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground?* it may be curs'd and devoted, though we do not ſee it actually wither'd and deſtroy'd.

But ſuppoſing this alſo, that we are allow'd a farther time and means for repentance; yet alas! no ordinary means will ſerve us, when we have been thus harden'd by cuſtomary ſinning: and I am ſure, ſhould God proceed with us by the meaſure of ſtrict juſtice, he might rather take from us even that which we have, than give us any extraordinary aſſiſtances which we have ſo abuſed.

And after all this, if God ſhould give us ſuch extraordinary aſſiſtances, whatever allowances God may make, yet there is ſtill no certain ſecurity or comfort to any dying death-bed Penitent; *Charitie hopeth all things, and believeth all things*, and the relaxations of the cenſures of the Church in Abſolution on probable ſigns of Repentance, muſt follow the judgment of Charity; yet the certainty of the ſinners Abſolution with God in Heaven depends only upon the inward real ſincerity of his Repentance, and conſequently upon the approving of it by his future converſation; and therefore God Almighty, who only knows what the one is at preſent, and what the other will be, can be a competent judge of it. And certainly tis enough for ſuch a Penitent if he be ſecured at laſt of entring into the Kingdom of heaven, though he has very rarely, if at all, the preſent comfortable experience and aſſurance of it on a death-bed repentance, which indeed is reſerv'd as the reward of a conſtant virtuous and holy life.

But though what I have ſaid be enough to conclude a death-bed repentance infinitely hazardous, and therefore hugely unfit for any wiſe man to depend upon; yet it will not be ſufficient to prove it abſolutely impoſſible. No ſober man certainly would hazard his life upon the chance of a Die, when tis a thouſand to one but he miſcarries; or venture into a crazy Cockboat out of a ſound Ship, when tis but barely poſſible he may be ſaved; and yet no wiſe man neither but will allow a poſſibility of being ſav'd both for the one and the other: and it is only this bare poſſibility of a death-bed repentance that I am now pleading for.

And that this poſſibility was produced into act, and ſo rendered very probable alſo in the caſe of this perſon here before us, will beſt be judged by the marks I am now to give you of the ſincerity of his repentance; for which I am in the next place to account.

3. And twas the power of the Divine grace, and of that only, that brake through all theſe obſtacles that I have now mentioned; that God (who is a God of infinite compaſſion and forbearance) allowed him leiſure and opportunitie for repentance; that he awaken'd him from his ſpiritual ſlumber by pungent ſickneſs: that gave him ſuch a preſence of mind, as both to provide prudently

for his worldly affairs, & yet not to be distracted or diverted by them from the thought of a better world; that lengthened out his day of grace, and accompanied the ordinary means of salvation, and the weak ministry of his Word, with the convincing and overruling power of his Spirit to his conscience; which Word of God became to him *quick & powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of his soul & spirit*; and at last the *Spirit of God witnessed to his spirit*, that now he was become *one of the children of God*.

Now if the Thief upon the Cross (an instance too much abused) was therefore accepted, because accompanied with all the effects of a sincere Convert, which his condition was capable of; as confession of Christ in the midst of the blasphemies of Pharisees, and his own lewd companion, and desertion even of Christs Disciples; if his repentance be therefore judged real, because he seems to be more concern'd in the remembrance of Christ's future Kingdom than his own death; if S. *Paul* was approved by the same more abundant labours, which he commended in the *Corinthians*, *yea what zeal? what fear? what vehement desire?* 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. I think I shall make it appear, that the repentance of this Person was accompanied with the like hopeful symptoms: and I am so sensible of that awful presence both of God and man before whom I speak, who are easily able to discover my failings, that *I* shall not deliver any thing, but what I know to be a strict and a religious truth.

Upon my first visit to him, (*May* 26.) just at his return from his journey out of the West, he most gladly received me, shew'd me extraordinary respects upon the score of mine Office, *thank'd God, who had in mercie and good providence sent me to him, who so much needed my prayers and counsels; acknowledging how unworthily heretofore he had treated that order of men, reproaching them that they were proud, and prophesied only for rewards; but now he had learnt how to value them; that he esteem'd them the servants of the most High God, who were to shew to him the way to everlasting life.*

At the same time I found him labouring under strange trouble and conflicts of mind, his spirit wounded, and his conscience full of terrors. Upon his journey he told me, *he had been arguing with greater vigour against God and Religion than ever he had done in his life time before, and that he was resolved to run 'em down with all the argument and spite in the world; but*, like the great Convert S. *Paul*, *he found it hard to kick against the pricks*. For God at that time had so struck his heart by his immediate hand, that presently he argued as strongly for God and virtue, as before he had done against it. That God strangely opened his heart, creating in his mind most awful and tremendous thoughts & Ideas of the Divine Majesty, with a delightful contemplation of the Divine Nature & Attributes, and of the loveliness of Religion and Virtue. *I never* (said he) *was advanced thus far towards happiness in my life before, tho upon the commissions of some sins extraordinary I have had some checks and warnings considerable from within, but still struggled with them; and so wore them off again.* The most observable that I remember was this: *One day at an Atheistical Meeting, at a person of Qualities I undertook to manage the Cause, and was the principal Disputant against God and piety, and for my performances received the applause of the whole company; upon which my mind was terribly struck, and I immediately reply'd thus to my self. Good God! that a Man, that walks upright, that sees the wonderful works of God, and has the use of his senses and reason, should use them to the defying of his Creator! But this was a good beginning towards my Conversion, to find my Conscience touch-*

d for my ſins, yet it went off again; nay, all my life long I had a ſecret value and reverence for an honeſt man, and lov'd Morality in others. But I had form'd an odd Scheme of Religion to my ſelf, which would ſolve all that God or Conſcience might force upon me; yet I was not ever well reconciled to the buſineſs of Chriſtianity, nor had that reverence for the Goſpel of Chriſt as ought to have. Which eſtate of mind continued, till the 53d. Chapter of *Iſaiah* was read to him, (wherein there is a lively deſcription of the Sufferings of our Saviour, and the benefits thereof,) and ſome other portions of Scripture; by the power and efficacy of which word, aſſiſted by his holy Spirit, God ſo wrought upon his heart, that he declar'd that *the miſteries of the Paſſion appeared ſo clear and plain to him, as ever any thing did that was repreſented in a glaſs*; ſo that that joy and admiration, which poſſeſs'd his ſoul upon the reading Gods Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had ſo much delight in his Teſtimonies, that in my abſence he begg'd his Mother and Lady to read the ſame to him frequently, and was unſatisfied (notwithſtanding his great pains and weakneſs) till he had learn'd eſpecially the 53. of *Iſaiah* without book.

At the ſame time, diſcourſing of his manner of life from his youth up, and which all men knew was too too much devoted to the *ſervice of ſin*, and that the *luſts of the fleſh, of the eye, and the pride of life* had captivated him: He was very large and particular in his acknowledgments about it, more ready to accuſe himſelf then I or any one elſe can be; publicly crying out, *O Bleſſed God, can ſuch an horrid Creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has deny'd thy Being, and contemn'd thy Power?* asking often, *Can there be mercy & pardon for me? Will God own ſuch a Wretch as I?* and in the middle of his ſickneſs ſaid, *ſhall the unſpeakable joys of Heaven be confer'd on me? O Mighty Saviour! never but through thine infinite Love and Satisfaction! O never but by the purchaſe of thy Bloud!* adding, *That with all abhorrency he did reflect upon his former life; that ſincerely and from his heart he did repent of all that folly and madneſs which he had committed.*

Indeed he had a true and lively ſenſe of Gods great mercy to him in ſtriking his hard heart, and laying his Conſcience open, which hitherto was deaf to all Gods calls and methods; ſaying, *if that God, who died for great as well as leſſer ſinners, did not ſpeedily apply his infinite merits to his poor ſoul, his wound was ſuch as no man could conceive or bear*, crying out, *that he was the vileſt Wretch and Dog that the Sun ſhined upon, or the earth bore, that now he ſaw his error in not living up to that Reaſon which God endued him with, and which he unworthily vilify'd and contemn'd*; wiſh'd he *had been a ſtarving Leper crawling in a ditch*, that he *had been a Link-boy or a Begger, or for* his *whole life time confin'd to a dungeon, rather then thus to have ſinn'd againſt his God.*

How remarkable was his Faith, in a hearty embracing and devout confeſſion of all the Articles of our Chriſtian Religon, and all the Divine miſteries of the Goſpel? ſaying, that *that abſurd and fooliſh Philoſophy, which the world ſo much admired, propagated by the late Mr.* Hobbes, *and others, had undone him and many more, of the beſt parts in the Nation*; who without Gods great mercy to them, may never, I believe, attain ſuch a Repentance.

I muſt not omit to mention his faithful adherance to, & caſting himſelf entirely upon, the mercies of Jeſus Chriſt, and the free grace of God, declared to repenting ſinners through him; with a thankful remembrance of his Life, Death, and Reſurrection; begging

His mighty love and eſteem of the holy Scriptures, his reſolutions to read them frequently, and meditate upon them if God ſhould ſpare him, having already taſted the good Word: for having ſpoken to his heart he acknowledged, *all the ſeeming abſurdities and contradictions therof, fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were vaniſhed, and the excellency and beauty appeared, being come to receive the truth in the love of it.*

His extaordinary fervent Devotions, in his frequent Prayers of his own, moſt excellent and correct; amongſt the reſt, for the King, in ſuch a manner as became a dutiful ſubject and a truly grateful Servant, for the Church and Nation, for ſome particular Relations, and then for all Men; his cailing frequently upon me at all hours to pray with him or read the Scriptures to him; and towards the end of his ſickneſs would heartily deſire *God to pardon his infirmities, if he ſhould not be ſo wakeful and intent through the whole duty as he wiſhed to be*; and that *tho the fleſh was weak yet the ſpirit was willing, and hoped God would accept that.*

His continual invocation of Gods grace, and holy Spirit to ſuſtain him, to keep him from all evil thoughts, from all temptations and Diabolical ſuggeſtions, and every thing which might be prejudicial to that religious temper of mind, which God had now ſo happily endued him withall, crying out, one night eſpecially, *how terribly the Tempter did aſſault him, by caſting upon him lewd and wicked imaginations, but I thank God* (ſaid he) *I abhor them all, and by the power of his grace, which I am ſure is ſufficient for me, I have overcome them; tis the malice of the Devil, becauſe I am reſcu'd from him; and the goodneſs of God that frees me from all my ſpiritual enemies.*

His great joy at his Ladies converſion from Popery to the Church of *England* (being as he tearm'd it, *A faction ſupported only by Fraud and Cruelty,*) which was by her done with deliberation and mature judgment; the dark miſts of which have for ſome months before been breaking away, but now cleared, by her receiving the bleſſed Sacrament with her dying Husband, at the receiving of which no man could expreſs more joy and devotion than he did; and having handled the word of life, and ſeen the ſalvation of God, in the preparation of his mind, he was now ready *to depart in peace.*

His hearty concern for the pious Education of his Children, wiſhing that his *Son might never be a Wit*, that is, (as he himſelf explain'd it,) *one of thoſe wretched Creatures, who pride themſelves in abuſing God and Religion, denying his Being, or his Providence, but that he might become an Honeſt and Religious man, which could only be the ſupport and bleſſing of his Family*; complaining *what a vicious and naughty world they were brought into*, and that *no Fortunes or Honours were comparable to the Love and Favour of God to them*, in whoſe Name he bleſſed them, pray'd for 'em, and committed them to his Protection.

His ſtrict charge to thoſe perſons, in whoſe cuſtody his Papers were, *to burn all his prophane and lewd Writings, as being only fit to promote Vice and Immorality, by which he had ſo highly offended God, and ſhamed and blaſpbemed that Holy Religion into which he had been Baptiz'd; & all his obſcene and filthy Pictures, which were ſo notoriouſly ſcandalous.*

His readineſs to make reſtitution to the utmoſt of his power to all perſons whom he had injur'd; and for thoſe whom he could not make a compenſation to, he prayed for Gods, and their pardons. His remarkable juſtice in taking all poſſible care for the payment of his debts, which, before, he confeſſed he had not ſo fairly and effectually done.

His readineſs to forgive all Injuries done againſt him, ſome more particulary mention'd

How tender and concern'd was he for his Servants about him in his extremities) manifeſted by the beneficence of his Will to them,) pitying their troubles in watching with him, and attending him, treating them with candor and kindneſs, as if they had been his Intimates!

How hearty were his endeavours to be ſerviceable to thoſe about him, exhorting them to *the fear and love of God, and to make a good uſe of his forbearance and long-ſuffering to ſinners, which ſhould lead them to repentance*; And here I muſt not paſs by his pious and moſt paſſionate exclamation to a Gentleman of ſome character, who came to viſit him upon his Death-bed: *O Remember that you contemn God no more, He is an avenging God, & will viſit you for your ſins; will in mercy, I hope, touch your conſcience ſooner or latter as he has done mine; You and I have been Friends and Sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you; We have been all miſtaken in our conceits and opinions; our perſuaſions have been falſe and groundleſs, therefore God grant you repentance.* And ſeeing him the next day again, he ſaid to him, *Perhaps you were diſobliged by my plainneſs to you yeſterday; I ſpake the words of truth and ſoberneſs to you*, and (ſtricking his hand upon his breſt) ſaid, *I hope God will touch your heart.*

Likewiſe his Commands to me, *to preach abroad and to let all men know* (if they knew it not already,) *how ſeverely God had diſciplin'd him for his ſins by his afflicting hand; that his ſufferings were moſt juſt, tho he had laid Ten thouſand times more upon him; how he had laid one ſtripe upon another becauſe of his grievous provocattions; till he had brought him home to himſelf; that in his former viſitations he had not that bleſſed effect he was now ſenſible of*, He had *formerly looſe thoughts and ſlight reſolutions of reforming, and deſign'd to be better, becauſe even the preſent conſequences of ſin were ſtill peſtering* him *and were ſo troubleſome and inconvenient to* him; *but that now* he had *other ſentiments of things, and acted upon other principles.*

His willingneſs to dye, if it pleaſed God, *reſigning himſelf always to the Divine diſpoſal but if God ſhould ſpare* him *yet a longer time here*, he *hoped to bring glory to the name of God in the whole courſe of his life, and particularly by his endeavours to convince others, and to aſſure them of the danger of their condition, if they continued impenitent, and how graciouſly God had dealt with* him.

His great ſenſe of his obligations to thoſe excellent men, the Right Reverend my Lord Biſhop of *Oxford*, and Dr. *Marſhal*, for their charitable and frequent Viſits to him, and Prayers with him; and Dr. *Burnet*, who came on purpoſe from *London* to ſee him, who were, all very ſervicable to his Repentance.

His extraordinary duty and reverence to his Mother, with all the grateful reſpects to her imaginable, and kindneſs to his good Lady, beyond expreſſion, (which may well enhance ſuch a loſs to them,) and to his Children, obliging them with all the endearments that a good Husband or a tender Father could beſtow.

To conclude theſe Remarks, I ſhall only read to you his dying Remomſtrance, ſufficiently atteſted and ſign'd by his own hand, as his trueſt ſenſe, (which I hope may be uſeful for that good end he deſign'd it,) in manner and form following.

FOr the benefit of all thoſe whom I may have drawn into ſin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my laſt Declaration, which I deliver in the preſence of the great God, who knows the ſecrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be

That

That from the bottom of my ſoul I deteſt and abhor the whole courſe of my former wicke life; that I think I can never ſufficiently admire the goodneſs of God, who has given me a tr ſenſe of my pernicious Opinions and vile Practices, by which I have hitherto lived witho Hope, and without God in the world; have been an open Enemy to Jeſus Chriſt, doing th utmoſt deſpite to the holy Spirit of grace. And that the greateſt teſtimony of my Charity t ſuch, is to warn 'em in the Name of God, and as they regard the welfare of their Immort Souls, no more to deny his Being, or his Providence, or deſpiſe his Goodneſs; no more to ma a mock of Sin, or contemn the pure and excellent Religion of my ever Bleſſed Redeemer, th whoſe Merits alone, I, one of the Greateſt of Sinners, do yet hope for Mercy and Forgiveneſ Amen.

Declared and Sign'd in the preſence of
ANNE ROCHESTER. *J. ROCHESTER.*
Robert Parſons. *June* 19 1680.

And now I cannot but mention with joy and admiration that ſteddy temper mind, which he enjoy'd through the whole courſe of his ſickneſs and Repentance; whic muſt proceed not from a hurry and perturbation of mind or body, ariſing from the fe of Death, or dread of Hell only, but from an ingenious love to God, and an uniform regard to Virtue, (ſuituable to that ſolemn declaration of his, *I would not commit the le ſin to gain a Kingdom*,) with all poſſible ſymptoms of a laſting perſeverance in it, if Go ſhould have reſtored him. To which may be added his comfortable perſwaſions God's accepting him to his mercy, ſaying three or four days before his death, *I ſhall di But Oh, what unſpeakable glories do I ſee! what joys, beyond thought or expreſſion, am I ſe ſible of! I am aſſured of Gods mercy to me through Jeſus Chriſt. Oh how I long to die and to with my Saviour!*

The time of his Sickneſs and Repentance was juſt nine weeks; in all which time was ſo much maſter of his reaſon, and had ſo clear an underſtanding, (ſaving 30 hour about the middle of it, in which he was delirous,) that he never dictated or ſpoke mor compoſed in his life: and therefore if any ſhall cotinue to ſay, his Piety was the effect madneſs or vapours; let me tell them, 'tis highly diſingenious, and that the aſſertion as ſilly as it is wicked. And moreover that the force of what I have delivered may n be evaded by wicked men, who are reſolv'd to harden their hearts maugre all Convict ons, by ſaying, *This thing was done in a corner*, I appeal, for the truth thereof, to ſorts of perſons who in conſiderable numbers viſited and attended him, and more parti culary to thoſe eminent Phyſicians who were near him, and converſant with him in th whole courſe of his tedious ſickneſs; and who, if any, are competent judges of a Phren ſy or *delirium*.

There are many more excellent things in my abſence which have occaſionally drop from his mouth, that will not come within the narrow compaſs of a Sermon; theſe, I hop will ſufficiently prove what I produce them for. And if any ſhall be ſtill unſatisfied her in in this hard-hearted generation, it matters not, let them at their coſt be Unbeliev ſtill, ſo long as this Excellent Penitent enjoys the comfort of his Repentance. And no from all theſe admirable ſigns we have great reaſon to believe comfortably, that h Repentance was real, and his End happy; and accordingly imitate the neighbours a

For so we must learn, like the Ambassadors to some new Prince, to turn our condolances into congratulations, in conformity to a heavenly example; *For there is joy in heaven over one Sinner that repents:*

1. A joy to *God the Father*, who has solemnly sworn, that he *delights not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live; who would have all men to be saved, & come to the knowledge of the truth.*

2. A joy to *God the Son*, that good shepherd, mention'd in the verse before my Text, who *left the ninety and nine* just persons *in the wilderness, and went after that which was lost, till he had found it; and when he had found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoyceing; and when he cometh home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours* (on heaven and earth) *saying unto them, Rejoyce with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.*

3. A joy *to God the Holy Ghost*, after he had been so often *griev'd*, so *despitefully treated*, and so long *resisted.*

And 4. a joy to the whole Court of Heaven *in the presence of the holy Angels*, v. 10. those *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister to those who should be heirs of salvation*. to see that now at last *their labour is not in vain in the Lord*, but that there is one more subject gained to the obedience of their and our common Lord, deliver'd from the slavery, and admitted to fill up the vacancy of Apostate Spirits.

And as our πολίτευμα, our proper or natural Citizenship or *conversation is in heaven*; should our joys too be conformable to those of our fellow-citizens. And therefore after the Relations and friends of this great Person have paid their natural tribute of tears to so near a relation, they should then turn their sorrows into joys, by the comfortable consideration of his being a Penitent upon earth, and a Saint in heaven.

Thus his dear Mother should rejoyce, that the Son of her love and of her fears, as well as her bowels, is now born again into a better world; adopted by his heavenly Father, and gone before her to take possession of an eternal inheritance.

2. His truly loveing Consort should rejoyce, that God has been so gracious to them both, as at the same time to give him a sight of his errors in point of Practice, and her self (not altogether without his means & endeavours) a sight of hers in point of Faith. And lastly, considering the great prejudices & dangers of the *Roman* Religion, I think I may say that there is joy in heaven, & should be on earth, for Her conversion, as well as His.

3. His Noble and most hopeful Issue should rejoyce, as their years are capable; not that a dear and loving Father has left them, but that since he must leave them, he has left them the example of a Penitent, and not of a Sinner; the Blessing of a Saint, in recommending them to an All-sufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal Curse that attends the posterity of the wicked and impenitent.

4. All good men should rejoyce, to see the triumphs of the Cross in these latter days, and the words of divine wisdom and power. And bad men certainly, when e- they consider it, are most of all concern'd to joy and rejoyce in it; as a condemn'd malefactor is to hear that a fellow-criminal has got his pardon, and that he may do so if he speedily sue for it.

And this joy of all will still be the greater, if we compare it with the joy there is the case of Just persons, that need no Repentance, *viz.* that need not such a sorrow or extraordinary Repentance, or the whole change of heart and mind, as great sinners do: and of this my Text pronounces, that there is *greater joy*

one such *sinner that* truly *repenteth, than there is over ninety & nine just persons that need no such a repentance.* And the reason we may conceive to be this; that since all Joy arises from Admiration and Surprize, as from something that is new and unexpected: accordingly the joy that proceeds from the repentance & new life of a notorious sinner, must needs be greater then that which rises from the constant piety of a good man, which we have seen every day: as a resurrection from the dead is more remarkable then our first life. Besides, that such a Penitents former failings, are ordinarily the occasion of a greater and more active piety afterwards; as our Convert earnestly wisht, *That God would have pleased to spare him but one year more, that in that he might honour his Name proportionably to the dishonour done to God in his whole life past.* And we see St. *Paul laboured more abundantly* than all the Apostles in the planting of the Church, because he had raged most furiously before in the destruction of it; and our Saviour himself tells us, that *whom much is forgiven they will love much, but to whom little is forgiven they will love little*; and we know, a Commander will love a Soldier more that redeems his former cowardise, by doing some brave and daring action, then him, who never had that taint upon him, but yet never atchieved any thing remarkable. A husbandman more rejoyces at the improvement of briars and thorns into an excellent crop from which once he had but little expectation; than for such a soil as was remarkable neither for the one or the other.

Tis certainly the more safe, indeed the only safe way to be constantly virtuous, and he that is wise indeed, i. e. *wise unto salvation*, will endeavour to be one of those that *need no repentance*; I mean that entire and whole work of beginning a new, but will draw out the same thred through his whole life, and not let the Sun go down upon any of his sins; but then the other repentance is the more remarkable, and where it is real the more effectual, to produce a fervent and a fruitful piety; besides the greater glory to God in the influence of the example. Which may probably be a farther reason of the excessive joy of Angels at the conversion of such a Sinner; because they, who are better acquainted with humane nature than we; and knowing it apt, like the Pharises, to demand a sign from heaven, for the reformation of corrupted customs; they discern too, that such desperare spiritual recoveries, will seem so many openings of the heavens in the descent of the holy Dove, visibly to the standers by; and accordingly will have the greater influence upon them. And tis this in the last place, that I am to recommend to all that hear me this day,

And having thus discharg'd the office of an Historian, in a faithful representation of the repentance and conversion of this great Sinner give me leave now to bespeak you as an Ambassador of Christ, and in his name earnestly *perswade you to be reconcil'd to him*, and to follow this Illustrious persons, not in his *Sins* any more, but in his sorrow for them, and his forsaking them. *I* hope better things of you, my brethren, then to think that all that now hear me, have need of such a repentance, tho all have need of some, and the best are most sensible of it. But if there be any in this place, or elsewhere who have been drawn into a complacency or practice of any kind of sin from his example, let these especially be perswaded *to break off their sins by repentance*, by the same example that as he has been *for the fall*, so he may be now *for the rising again of many in Israel*; God knows there are to many that are wise enough to discern & follow the examples of the [illegible] to do good from those examples they have no power; like those absurd flatterers

read of, who could imitate *Plato* in his crookedneſs, *Ariſtotle* in his ſtammering, & *Alexander* the great in the bending of his neck & ſhrilneſs of his voice, but either could not or would not imitate them in any of their perfections; or like to thoſe bad ſtomachs, that delight in dirt & charcoal, but nauſeate ſavory & wholſome food. Such as theſe I would beſeech, in their cooler ſeaſons, to ask themſelves that queſtion, *What fruit had you in thoſe things whereof you are now aſhamed, for the end of theſe things is death?* And if any incourage themſelves in their wickedneſs from this example, reſolving however to enjoy the good things that are preſent; *to fill themſelves with coſtly wines, and to let no part of pleaſure paſs by them* untaſted, ſuppoſing with the Goſpel rich man that when *one comes to them from the dead*, when Sickneſs or old Age, approaches that then *they will repent*; let ſuch as theſe conſider the dreadful hazard they run by ſuch pernicious counſels. It may be (and it is but juſt with God it ſhould be) that whilſt they are making *proviſions for the fleſh to fulfil the Luſts thereof*, and are ſaying to their ſouls, *Soul thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, there-fore take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry*; perhaps juſt then at the ſame time the hand of God may be writing upon the Walls of their habitations that fatal ſentence, *Thou fool this night ſhalt thy ſoul be required of thee, and then whoſe ſhall all thoſe things be, which thou haſt provided?* And what ſad reflections muſt ſuch a one needs make upon his own folly, when he ſees that all that mirth and eaſe which he has promiſed himſelf for ſo many years, muſt be at an end in a very few hours? and not only ſo, but that mirth turn'd into howlings, and that eaſe into a bed of flames; when the ſoul muſt be torn away on a ſudden from the things it loved, & go where it will hate to live, & yet cannot die. And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the *things which belong to our* everlaſting *peace*, before *they are hid from our eies?* Were it not better for us all to be wiſe betimes by preventing ſuch a danger, then to open our eies, as the unhappy rich man did, when we are in the place of torment?

Be perſwaded then with humble, penitent and obedient hearts to go out of your ſinful ſelves and meet the bleſſed *Jeſus*, who is now on the way, and comes to us in the perſon and in the bowels of a Saviour, woing us to accept thoſe eaſie conditions of pardon and peace offer'd in his holy Goſpel, rather then to ſtay till he become our Adverſary and our Judge too, when he will *deliver us over to the tormentors, till we have paid the uttermoſt farthing*, i. e. to all eternity: when thoſe who have made a mock at ſin all their lives, and laugh'd at the pretended cheats of Religion and its Prieſts, ſhall find themſelves at laſt the greateſt fools, and the moſt ſadly cheated in the world; for God will then *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh, when it cometh as deſolation, and their deſtruction as a whirlwind*. And ſince they would not ſuffer his Mercy to rejoice over his Juſtice, nor cauſe any joy in heaven, as the Text mentions, in their converſion; his Juſtice will certainly rejoice over his mercy, and cauſe joy in heaven (as it did at the fall of *Babylon*, which *would not be cured*, *Rev.* 19.1.) in their confuſion. And O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would conſider this betimes. that in the midſt of their carnal jollities they would but vouchaſe one regard to what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the end of theſe things.

For however the fruits of ſin may ſeem *pleaſant to the eie and to be deſired*, *to make one* ſeem *wiſe* and witty to the world; yet alas, they are all but empty and unſatisfactory at preſent, and leave a mortal ſting behind them, and *bitterneſs in the end* like the book St.

John

John ate, (*Rev.* 10. 10.) *which in his mouth was ſweet as honey, but as ſoon as he had t*
ten it, his belly was bitter. And tho God ſhould pleaſe at laſt to bring men back in thei
old age from their ſinful courſes, by a *way of weeping*: to pluck them as *fire-brand*
out of *everlaſting burnings*; yet if men conſider how rare and difficult a thing it is t
be *born again when one is old*, how many pangs and violences to nature there mu
needs be, to put off the habits and inclinations to old ſins: as difficult (ſaith the Pro
phet) *as for the Leopard to change his ſpots, or the Ethiopian his ſkin*; and then when that
done, what ſcars and weakneſs even a Cure muſt leave behind; I ſay, he that du
conſiders this, will think it better to ſecure his ſalvation, and all his preſent true com
forts, by preſerving his innocency, or alleviating his work by a daily repentance fo
leſſer failings, then to venture upon one ſingle chance of a Death-bed repentance; whic
is no more to be depended upon, for the performance, or acceptance, then it can en
courage any man not to labour, becauſe *Elias* was fed by Ravens, or the Iſraelite
with Manna from heaven.

If then there be any (tho alas that need not be asked) that have made the greatne
of their wit, or birth, or fortune, *inſtruments of iniquity to iniquity*; let them now con
vert them, in their own converſion, to that original noble uſe for which God intende
them, *viz.* to be *inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto holineſs.*

To theſe eſpecially that are thus great, not only God, but this great Perſon alſo, b
my mouth, *being dead yet ſpeaketh*; for as St. *Paul* ſeem'd more eſpecially concern'd fo
his brethren and kinſmen according to the fleſh; and even the rich man in hell, th
ſufficiently diſtracted by his own ſufferings, yet ſeems hugely deſirous that one migh
be ſent from the dead to his brethren, that he might *teſtifie unto them, leſt they alſo com*
into that place of torment: So this illuſtrious Convert, after God had open'd his eyes t
to ſee his follies, was more eſpecially deſirous of the ſalvation of thoſe that were his bre
thren, tho not in the fleſh, yet in the greatneſs of their quality, & of their ſins; paſſionatel
wiſhing, *that all ſuch, were not only almoſt, but altogether ſuch as he now was*, ſaving his bodily
afflictions; and of great force, methinks, ſhould the admonitions of a dying friend b
The ingenious *Michael de Montaigne* reckons him the beſt Phyſician, who himſelf ha
had the diſeaſe which he pretends to cure; and behold a greater than he ſays to S
Peter, when thou art converted, ſtrengthen thy brethren; which aſſures us, that they whic
have themſelves been in a condition to need a remarkable converſion, are not incapabl
thereby, but obliged, and the better qualified for ſuch a charitable work.

Now theſe eſpecially I would beſeech, as the Miniſter of Chriſt, and as ſuch, *tho w*
are reviled we bleſs, tho we are defamed we intreat, to *ſuffer the word of Exhortation*; tha
they would not terminate their eyes upon the outward pomp and pageantry that at
tends them, as the vulgar Jews did upon their Rites and Ceremonies; but (as the wiſe
Iſraelites, who eſteem'd thoſe glittering formalities as the Types and Images of heaven
ly things,) be quickened by them to the ambition of original honours, and future glory
How much were it to be wiſh'd, that ſuch perſons eſpecially would be followers of God
and goodneſs, ſince whether they will or no men will be followers of them; all of them
according to their reſpective magnitudes, like Stars, caſting a good or bad influence
upon their inferiors, and not only ſo, but oftentimes upon their ſuperiors too; as the
corrupt blood in the feet, in the courſe of its circulation, after ſome time paſſes upwards

It is true, an eminent ſtation is liable to ſeveral miſchiefs, from which a mean condition is free; but the God of order, who has made dignity in place, and affluence of riches neceſſary to the world, has proportion'd his ſupports: and if the incitements to *ſin do abound* unto the rich and noble, *the grace of God*, if they are careful to improve it, *will much more abound*, both to Gods glory and their own. Thus if the temptations of great perſons be more, and greater, than thoſe of inferiors; their abilities and understandings are ordinarily greater too: & if they lie more open to the aſſaults of the Devil, they have generally greater ſagacities to foreſee the danger, & more powerful aſſiſtances to go through it. Nor is Piety inconſiſtent with greatneſs, any more than it is with Poverty, but is the beſt foundation and ſecurity both to the one and the other. The breeding of *Moſes* at Court, without doubt contributed much even to his Religious performances, at leaſt ſo far, as to make them more uſeful and exemplary to others: but then he was ſincerely virtuous all the while, as well whilſt reputed the Son of *Pharaoh*'s daughter, as *Jethro*'s Son in law. The Prophet *Iſaiah* was Nephew to a King, and bred, as is ſuppoſed in the Court; whence we may obſerve his ſtyle is more majeſtick than the other Prophets; as that of the great Doctor of the Gentiles, who was bred at the feet of *Gamaliel*, is than the other Apoſtles; God making uſe of the natural tempers and educations of men, to be aſſiſting to ſupernatural purpoſes.

We find Chriſtians in *Ceſar*'s houſhold as ſoon as any where elſe in *Rome*; and when Chriſtianity had once gain'd *Conſtantine*, it ſpred it ſelf farther over the Empire in a few years, than before it had done in ſome Centuries: as waters running downwards ſpred themſelves freer, then when forced upwards againſt nature. Since then ſo much miſchief depends upon Illuſtrious examples, will it not better become men to draw the multitude after them to heaven, by their piety, than by infectious guilts be at the head of a miſerable company of the Damn'd?

'Tis this piety, a timely and an exemplary piety, that will perpetuate to men of birth and fortunes, their Honors, and their Eſtates too, as well by deriving on them the bleſſing of God, who is the true fountain of honor; as by creating an aw and a reverence for them from all orders of men, even to many generations; a reverence which will be freſh and laſting, when all the trophies of wit and gaity are laid in the duſt. 'Tis this piety that will be the guide of their youth, and the comfort of their age; for *length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.* 'Tis this, and this only, that can make all outward bleſſings comfortable, and indeed bleſſings, to us, by making them the ſteps and means of attaining the never fading honors and incomprehenſible glories of that Kingdom which is above; where there ſhall be no more ſin, nor ſickneſs, nor pain, nor tears, nor death, but we ſhall reſt from our labours, and our works ſhall follow us.

Unto which God of his infinite mercy bring us, for the merits and for the mediation of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Saviour; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us aſcribe all Praiſe and Adoration, now and for ever. *Amen.*

THE END.

A

SERMON

Preached at the

FUNERAL

Of the Right Honourable

JOHN

EARL OF

ROCHESTER,

Who died at *Woodſtock-Park*, *July* 26. 1680. and was buried at *Spilsbury* in *Oxford-ſhire*, Aug. 9.

By *Robert Parſons* M. A. Chaplain to the Right Honourable ANNE *Counteſs-Dowager* of ROCHESTER.

DUBLIN,

printed by *Benjamin Took* and *John Crook*, Printers to the King's moſt Excellent Majeſty; and are to be ſold by *Mary Crook* at His Majeſties Printing-Houſe in *Skinner-Row*. 1681.

To the Right Honourable

ANNE, *and* ELIZABETH,

DOWAGER-COUNTESSES of

ROCHESTER,

Right Honourable,

YOur Ladiſhips, or any elſe, cannot think meaner of this performance than I my ſelf do; for beſides the great hurry and diſorder that I was in upon the loſs of ſuch a Patron as my Lord, *I am ſufficiently conſcious how unfit I am to appear in public, eſpecially upon ſuch a nice and great Subject. As his Lordſhips particular Commands brought me to the Pulpit, ſo Yours only have brought me to the preſs. And therefore I hope, whatever uſage the following Diſcourſe may meet with abroad; I ſhall always find a ſhelter in your Ladiſhips Favours: and the rather, becauſe you can, both of you, largely atteſt the truth*

of most of the remarkable Occurrences that I have taken no
tice of during his Lordships penitential sickness, I sha
adde nothing more, but wish You may never forget the good
ness of Almighty God, who (through this whole melancho
ly Scene) has signalized his good providences to You both
and that You may ever live under the special protection
thereof, is the constant prayer of

Your HONOURS

Most Faithful and most
obedient humble Servant,

Adderbury, *Aug.* 30.
1680.

ROBERT PARSONS.

St. LUKE 15. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninetie and nine just persons that need no repentance.

IF ever there were a subject that might deserve and exhaust all the treasures of religious eloquence in the description of so great a man, and so great a sinner as now lies before us; together with the wonders of the Divine goodness, in making him great a Penitent; I think the present occasion affords one as remarkable as any place or time can produce.

Indeed so great and full of matter it is, that tis too big to come out of my mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The greatness of his parts are well enough known, and of his Sins too well in the world; and neither my capacity, nor experience or my profession will allow me to be so proper a judge, either of the one or the other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad Spectator, and a secret mourner for his sins; so has he at last graciously heard the prayers of his nearest Relations and true Friends, for his conversion and repentance: and tis the good tidings of that especially, what God has done for his soul, that I am now to *publish and tell abroad to the world*, not only by the obligations of mine Office, in which *I* had the honour to be a weak Minister to it, but by his own express and dying commands.

Now although, to describe this worthily, would require a wit equal to that with which he lived, and a devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either will be a very hard task; yet besides that *I* am not sufficient for these things, (for who is?) and that my thoughts have been rather privately busied to secure a real repentance to himself, whilst living; than to publish it abroad to others in artificial dress after he is dead; I say, besides all this, I think I shall have less need to call in the aids of secular eloquence. The proper habit of Repentance is not fine linnen, or any delicate array, such as are used in the Court or Kings houses, but *Sackcloath and Ashes*: And the way which God Almighty takes to convey it, *is not by the words of mans wisdome*, but by the plainness of his written Word, assisted by the Inward power and *demonstration of the Spirit*: and the effects it works, and by which it discovers it self, are not any raptures of wit and fancy, but the most humble prostrations both of soul and spirit, and the captivating all humane imaginations to the obedience of a despised Religion, and a crucified Saviour.

And tis in this array I intend to bring out this Penitent to you; an array which I am sure he more valued, and desired to appear in, both to God and the World, than in all the triumphs of Wit and Gallantry. And therefore (waving all these Rhetorical flourishes, as beneath the solemnity of the occasion, and the majesty of that great and weighty Truth I am now to deliver) I shall content my self with the office of a plain Historian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I saw and heard; especially during his penitential sorrows; which if all that heard me this day, had been spectators of, there would then have been no need of a Sermon to convince men, but every man would have been as much a Preacher to himself of this truth, as I am, except these sorrows: And yet even these sorrows should be turn'd into joys too, if we would only do what we pray for, that the *will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven*: for so our Blessed Lord assure

us

us; *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*, &
From which I shall consider,

1. The Sinner particularly that is before us.

2. The Repentance of this Sinner, together with the means, the time, and all prob
ble sincerity of it.

3. The joy that is in heaven, and should be on earth, for the repentance of this Sinn

4. The comparitive greatness and preeminence of this joy, on the account of this e
ample, that is, and should be for the repentance of this Sinner, more then for the co
stant and uniforme virtuousness of any good liver; which will naturally lead me to

Fifth and last particular, to a special address or application to all that hear me; th
they would all joyn in this joy, in praise and thanksgiving to God for the conversion
this Sinner; and if there be any that have been like him in their sins, that they wou
also speedily imitate him in their repentance.

And first, let us consider the person before us, as he certainly was, a great Sinn
But because man was upright before he was a sinner, and to measure the greatness
his fall, it will be necessary to take a view of that height from which he fell; give
leave to go back a little to look into the rock from which he was hewn, the Quality
Familie, Education, and personal accomplishments of this Great man. In doing of whi
I think no man will charge me with any design of customary flattery, or formality; sin
I intend only thereby to shew the greatness and unhappiness of his folly, in the perve
ting so many excellent abilities and advantages for virtue and piety into the service
sin, and so becoming a more universal, insinuating, and prevailing example of it.

As for his Family, on both sides, from which he was descended, they were so
of the most famous in their generations. His Granfather was that Excellent and tr
ly great man, *Charles* Lord *Wilmot*, Viscount *Athlone* in *Ireland*. *Henry* his Fathe
who inherited the same Title and Greatness, was by His late Majesty King *CHARL*
the I. created Baron of *Adderbury* in *Oxfordshire*, and by his present Majesty Earl of R
chester. He was a man of signal Loyalty and integrity indeed; and of such Coura
and Conduct in Military affairs as became a great General. But my endeavours
this kind are superseded, tho I had time, by my want of abilities to declare it worth
ly, as well as by the notoriety of these severals; and that person must be very ignora
of the late Transactions in the three Kingdoms, and the misfortunes of our prese
King, who understands not the service and value of that eminent Subject. His M
ther (of whom I might speak great and worthy things, were it not that I avoid t
imputation of flattery) was the Relict of Sir *Francis Henry Lee* of *Ditchly* in the Coun
of *Oxford* Baronet, Grandmother to the present Right Honourable Earl of *Litchfiel*
and the Daughter of that Genenerous and Honourable Gentleman Sir *John St. Joh*
of *Lyddiard* in the County of *Wilts* Baronet, whose Family was so remarkable for lo
alty, that several of his Sons willingly offer'd themselves in the day of battel, and d
ed for it; and whilst the memory of the *English* or *Irish* Rebellion lasts, that Fami
cannot want a due veneration in the minds of any person, that loves God or the Kin

As for his Education, it was in *Wadham* College in *Oxford*, under the care of th
wise and Excellent Governour Dr. *Blanford*, the late Right Reverend Bishop of *Wo*
cester; there it was that he laid a good foundation of learning and study, though
afterwards built upon that foundation hay and stubble. There he first suck'd from th
[illegible] of his Mother the University those perfections of Wit, and Eloquence & Poetr
whi

hich afterwards by his own corrupt ſtomach, or ſome ill juices after, were turn[illegible]
yſon to himſelf and others: which certainly can be no more a blemiſh to thoſe Il-
ſtrious Seminaries of Piety and good learning, than a diſobedient Child is to a wiſe
d virtuous Father, or the fall of Man to the excellency of Paradiſe.

His Quality I ſhall take no notice of, there being ſo much of what was excellent and
traordinary in this great perſon, that I have no room for any thing that is common
him with others.

A Wit he had ſo rare and fruitful in its invention, and withal ſo choice and deli-
te in its judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his compoſures to give a full an-
er to that queſtion, What & where Wit is? except the purity and choice of ſubject: for
d ſuch excellent ſeeds but fallen upon good ground, and inſtead of pitching upon
Beaſt or a Luſt, been raiſed upon high, to celebrate the myſteries of the Divine
ve, in Pſalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual ſongs; I perſwade my ſelf we might by
is time have receiv'd from his pen as excellent an Idea of Divine Poetry, under the
oſpel, uſeful to the teaching of vertue, eſpecially in this generation, as his prophane
rſes have been to deſtroy it. And I am confident, had God ſpared him a longer
e, this would have been the whole buſineſs of it, as I know it was the vow and
rpoſe of his ſickneſs.

His natural talent was excellent, but he had hugely improved it by Learning and
duſtry, being throughly acquainted with all Claſſick Authors, both Greek and
tin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him, amongſt thoſe of his quality.
hich yet he uſed not, as other Poets have done, to tranſlate or ſteal from them,
t rather to better and improve them by his own natural fancy. And whoever reads
Compoſures, will find all things in them ſo peculiarly great, new, and excellent,
at he will eaſily pronounce, That tho he has lent to many others, yet he has borrow-
of none; and that he has been as far from a ſordid imitation of thoſe before him, as
will be from being reach'd by thoſe that follow him.

His other perſonal accompliſhments in all the perfections of a Gentleman for the
ourt or the Country, whereof he was known by all men to be a very great Maſter,
no part of my buſineſs to diſcribe or underſtand; and whatever they were in them-
ves, I am ſure they were but miſerable comforters to him, ſince they only miniſter'd
his ſins, and made his example the more fatal and dangerous; for ſo we may own,
nay I am obliged by him not to hide, but to ſhew the rocks which others may a-
oid) that he was once one of the *greateſt of ſinners*.

And truly none but one ſo great in parts could be ſo; as the chiefeſt of the Angels
r knowledge and power became moſt degenerate. His ſins were like his parts, (for
om them corrupted they ſprang) all of them high & extraordinary. He ſeem'd to af-
ſomething ſingular and paradoxical in his Impieties, as well as in his Writings,
ove the reach and thoughts of other men; taking as much pains to draw others in,
d to pervert the right ways of vertue, as the Apoſtles and Primitive Saints, *to ſave
eir own ſouls and them that heard them.* For this was the heightning and amazing
rcumſtance of his ſins, that he was ſo diligent and induſtrious to recommend and
opagate them; not like thoſe of old that *hated the light*, but thoſe the Prophet men-
ons, *Iſ.* 3. 9. *who declare their ſin as Sodom, and hide it not*, that *take it upon their
olders, and bind it to them as a Crown*; framing Arguments for Sin, making Proſ-

ly

lytes to it, and Writing Panegyricks upon Vice; singing praises to the great enemy
God, and casting down Coronets and Crowns before his Throne.

Nay so confirm'd was he in sin, that he lived, and oftentimes almost died, a Mar
for it. God was pleased sometimes to punish him with the effects of his folly, yet t
now (he confessed) *they had no power to melt him into true repentance*; or if at any th
he had some lucid intervals from his folly and madness, yet (alas) how short and tra
sitory were they? all that *goodness was but as a morning cloud, and as the early de
which vanishes away*; he still return'd to the same excess of riot, and that with so mu
the more greediness, the longer he had fasted from it.

And yet even this desperate Sinner, that one would think had made *a covenant wit
Death, and was at an agreement with Hell*, and just upon the brink of them both; God,
magnifie the riches of his grace and mercy, was pleased to snatch as a brand out of th
fire. As St. *Paul* tho *before a blasphemer, a persecuter, and injurious*, yet *obtain'd mer
cy, that in him Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them th
should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.* 1 *Tim.* 1. 13. 16. So God struck hi
to the ground as it were by a light from heaven, and a voice of thunder round abou
him. Insomuch that now the scales fall from his eyes, as they did from St. *Paul's*
his stony heart was open'd, and streams of tears gush out, the bitter but wholsom
tears of true repentance.

And that this may appear to be so, I think it necessary to account for these thre
things.

1. For the means of it: that it was not barely the effect of sickness, or the fear o
death; but the hand of God also working in them and by them manifestly.

2. For the time of it: that though it was a death-bed repentance, and therefor
at of danger, and the utmost hazard; yet it was not impossible to be true, nor ab
olutely desperate.

3. For the sincerity of it: that what was thus possible to be good and true, pro
ably was so; which though none but God that sees the heart, can tell certainly, ye
an even also may and ought to believe it; not only in the judgment of charity, but o
oral justice, from all evident signs of it, which were possible to be given by one i
is condition.

And first for the Means and method of it. That which prepared the way for i
was a sharp and painful sickness, with which God was pleased to visit him; the wa
which the Almighty often takes to reduce the wandering sinner to the knowledge o
God and of himself: *I will be unto Ephraim as a Lion, and as a young Lion unto the house o
Judah; I even I will tear and go away, and none shall relieve him; I will go and return t
my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face*; and *in their affliction they wil
seek me early. Hos.* 5. 14, 15.

And tho to forsake our sins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, seems to b
rather the effect of impotency and necessity, than of choice, and so not so acceptabl
or praise-worthy; yet we find God Almighty uses the one to bring about the other;
and improves a forced abstinance from sin, into a settl'd loathing and a true detestati
of it. of which I shall give two noted instances. The first out of the Old Te
ment, in that famous case of *Manasseh*, 2 *Chron.* 33. (the nearest parallel that I can
find, both to the sin, and repentance of the person before us,) when *he did that which
was*

as evil in the sight of the Lord, more then all the Kings of Judah before him, and had made Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to erre, and do worse then the Heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before them; yet we see God made use even of this way to reduce him to true repentance, for we read at the 11. *v.* of this Chapter: *Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the Captains of the host of the King of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon*; and it follows in the next verse, *When he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem and unto his Kingdom*; *then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God*, v. 13 And the truth of his repentance, tho occasioned first by his affliction, appeared afterwards by the following reformation which he wrought; *for he took away the strange Gods*. v. 15.

The second instance I shall give of a true, tho forced repentance, is in that well known case of the Prodigal Son, which follows my Text in this Chapter: tho *he had wasted all his substance with riotous living*, and was forced back to his fathers house only by extream hunger and necessity, yet he was joyfully received by him, for *his father ran & fell on his neck, and kissed him*, v. 20. and *the fatted calf* was killed for him; and when his elder brother was angry at it, the good father justifies his procedure, *v.* 32. *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found.*

And truly 'tis one good sign, that God is now taking men into the number of his children, when he is fixing upon them one of the greatest badges and characters of them; for therefore saith the Apostle, *we are chastned of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*; whilst those who are reserv'd for destruction hereafter, do usually in this life *come into no misfortune, nor are plagued like other men.* For God, *does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*: but as he is grieved himself for the sufferings of his children, (for *in all their affliction*, saith *the* Prophet, *he was afflicted*,) so he doth not usually punish wicked men both here, and hereafter: and therefore they who are to be punished with everlasting destruction, God suffers to *enjoy their portion in this life* without disturbance; And because the days of *darkness* must be *many*, therefore does he suffer the *sinner* many times to *die an hunderd years old*, that he may take his full swing of that he hath set his affections upon, and after a long and prosperous life here, without any check in his career of wickedness, he lets him drop down into hell, without the least apprehension of danger. So that in that sense it is true which the Poets say, when they tell us that the descent into Hell is easie and pleasant.

And therefore on the contrary we may reasonably presume, that tribulation and anguish, when it is born with patience, & resignation to God, and when it Works a serious reformation, will certainly minister to us an entrance into everlasting rest, & that the greater our sufferings have been, the more aboundant & much more grateful shall the rest be. *Affliction*, as it *rises not out of the dust*, but descends from that God, at whose hands we receive evil as well as good; so neither is it design'd to deject us thither, but raise us to God from whence it self comes. The pains of the Cross, as well that Cross which we must bear our selves, as that which our Saviour bore, do in some sense open the Kingdom of heaven to all believers; and to some, as the Penitent thief, the hope of Paradise is not given till their last hour; and those who come in then, God is often plea-

pleased to make equal to them who *have born the burden and heat of the day*; nay oft times to give them more, for he *will love much, to whom much is forgiven.*

It is true, there are such stubborn natures, that like clay are rather hardened by the of afflictions; ungratious children, that fly in the face of their heavenly Father in very instant when he is correcting them; or, it may be, like those children under rod, who promise wonders then, and presently after forget all. Such as these we h described. *Ps.* 78. 34. 35. 36. 37. *When he slew them, then they sought him, and return'd and enquired early after God; then they remember'd that God was their rock, and the high God was their redeemer; nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mou and lied unto him with their tongues, for their hearts was not right with him, neither contin they stedfast in his covenant.* And tis probable this has been the case formerly of this p son. But there was an evident difference betwixt the effect of this sickness upon hi and many others before: *He had other sentiments of things now*, (he told me) *and a upon quite different principles*; he was not vext with it as it was painful, or hind him from his sins, which he would have *roll'd under his tongue* all the while, and son again to be at; but he *submitted patiently to it; accepted it as the hand of God, and thankful, blessing and praising God not only in, but for his extremities.* There were now *cursing*, no *railings* or *reproaches* to his servants, or those about him, which in other s nesses were their usual entertainment, but he treated them with all the meekness patience in the world, begging pardons frequently of the meanest of them but for a sly word, which the extremity of his sickness and the sharpness of his pain might e force from him. His prayers were not so much for ease or health, or a continuanc life; as for grace, and faith, and perfect resignation to the will of God. So that I th we may not only charitably but justly conclude, that his sickness was not the chief gredient, but through the grace of God an effectual means of a true, tho late acpenta

2. And for that I am to account in the next place, I mean the time of it; and to m out to you, that tho it was a Death-bed repentance, and therefore full of danger the utmost hazard, yet it was not wholly impossible to be true, nor absolutely desper

That it was hugely dangerous, and of the utmost hazard to defer it so long, must ne be granted by all wise and considering men: I wish all men were so wise as seriously consider it, and provide for it.

For should God have snatch'd him away in the very act of his sin, and that, like *Zi* and *Cozby*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, *Ananias* or *Sapphira*, he had gon down quick into h yet we must have acknowledged, that *righteous art thou O Lord, and clear when thou judged.* If God had taken him from the Land of the living, either by some sudden a dent, by a raging Feaver, or by some stupid Lethurgy or Apoplexie, which he had had time for reflection or repentance; in what a dreadful condition had his soul been fo ver? Or if God had vouchsafed him (as he did) some sharp lingring sickness, w he might have had leisure to repent; yet what assurance was there that such a rep rance would have followed? or if it had, that it would have been accepted? Was it more likely that he would still have cried with the wise Wise man's sluggard; *yet a li sleep, and a little slumber, till poverty* a dismal poverty; *came upon him.*

But if he had resolv'd at that time to break off his sins by repentance, yet alas how roper a time was that for it? Tis not easie to be present & consistent to our selves, w e are surrounded with disquieting if not stupifying pains, when there is a necessary

cay and dulness of spirits, a short memory, flat and low affections; & at the same time more than ordinary hurry and surcharge of worldly business; a house to be set in or-r, children to be provided for in their fortunes and education; creditors to be satisfi-, and all this amidst the cries and mournings of our nearest relations and friends about . And certainly we must think repentance a very easie task, if we reckon ordinarily, that that is disabled from all other things else, shall yet be fit to perfect and compleat it.

But allowing our thoughts to be as clear or clearer in our sickness than in our calmest d strongest seasons, (which yet I think no man in his wits will believe) yet after all, what curity have we that we shall be able to improve or imploy it to a true repentance? It may before we come to that, the measure of our iniquities is filled up already, & the irrever-le sentence is gone out, tho not executed against us: my patience *shall not always strive* μὴ καταμείνῃ, as the LXX) with men; *cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground?* it may be rs'd and devoted, though we do not see it actually wither'd and destroy'd.

But supposing this also, that we are allow'd a farther time and means for repentance; t alas! no ordinary means will serve us, when we have been thus harden'd by customa-sinning: and I am sure, should God proceed with us by the measure of strict justice, be ght rather take from us even that which we have, than give us any extraordinary assi-nces which we have so abused.

And after all this, if God should give us such extraordinary assistances, whatever al-wances God may make, yet there is still no certain security or comfort to any dying ath-bed Penitent; *Charitie hopeth all things, and believeth all things*, and the relaxations the censures of the Church in Absolution on probable signs of Repentance, must fol-w the judgment of Charity; yet the certainty of the sinners Absolution with God in aven depends only upon the inward real sincerity of his Repentance, and consequent-upon the approving of it by his future conversation; and therefore God Almighty, o only knows what the one is at present, and what the other will be, can be a compe-nt judge of it. And certainly tis enough for such a Penitent if he be secured at last of tring into the Kingdom of heaven, though he has very rarely, if at all, the present com-rtable experience and assurance of it on a death-bed repentance, which indeed is re-v'd as the reward of a constant virtuous and holy life.

But though what I have said be enough to conclude a death-bed repentance infinite-hazardous, and therefore hugely unfit for any wise man to depend upon; yet it wil t be sufficient to prove it absolutely impossible. No sober man certainly would hazard life upon the chance of a Die, when tis a thousand to one but he miscarries; or ven-re into a crazy Cockboat out of a sound Ship, when tis but barely possible he may be ed; and yet no wise man neither but will allow a possibility of being sav'd both for one and the other: and it is only this bare possibility of a death-bed repentance that m now pleading for.

And that this possibility was produced into act, and so rendered very probable also in case of this person here before us, will best be judged by the marks I am now to give u of the sincerity of his repentance; for which I am in the next place to account.

3. And twas the power of the Divine grace, and of that only, that brake rough all these obstacles that I have now mentioned; that God (who is a od of infinite compassion and forbearance) allowed him leisure and op-rtunitie for repentance; that he awaken'd him from his spiritual slumber by ungent sickness; that gave him such a presence of mind, as both to provide prudently

 so

for his worldly affairs, & yet not to be distracted or diverted by them from the thoughts of a better world; that lengthened out his day of grace, and accompanied the ordinary means of salvation, and the weak ministry of his Word, with the convincing and overruling power of his Spirit to his conscience; which Word of God became to him *quick, powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of his soul & spirit*; and at last the *Spirit of God witnessed to his spirit*, that now he was become *one of the children of God*.

Now if the Thief upon the Cross (an instance too much abused) was therefore accepted, because accompanied with all the effects of a sincere Convert, which his condition was capable of; as confession of Christ in the midst of the blasphemies of Pharisees, and his own lewd companion, and desertion even of Christs Disciples; if his repentance therefore judged real, because he seems to be more concern'd in the remembrance of Christ's future Kingdom than his own death; if S. *Paul* was approved by the same more abundant labours, which he commended in the *Corinthians*, *yea what zeal? what fear, what vehement desire?* 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. I think I shall make it appear, that the repentance of this Person was accompanied with the like hopeful symptoms: and I am so sensible of the awful presence both of God and man before whom I speak, who are easily able to discover my failings, that *I* shall not deliver any thing, but what *I* know to be a strict and a religious truth.

Upon my first visit to him, (*May* 26.) just at his return from his journey out of the West, he most gladly received me, shew'd me extraordinary respects upon the score of mine Office, *thank'd God, who had in mercie and good providence sent me to him, who so much needed my prayers and counsels; acknowledging how unworthily heretofore he had treated the order of men, reproaching them that they were proud, and prophesied only for rewards; but now he had learnt how to value them; that he esteem'd them the servants of the most High God, who were to shew to him the way to everlasting life.*

At the same time I found him labouring under strange trouble and conflicts of mind; his spirit wounded, and his conscience full of terrors. Upon his journey he told me, *he had been arguing with greater vigour against God and Religion than ever he had done in his time before, and that he was resolved to run 'em down with all the argument and spite in the world; but*, like the great Convert S. *Paul*, *he found it hard to kick against the pricks.* God at that time had so struck his heart by his immediate hand, that presently he argued as strongly for God and virtue, as before he had done against it. That God strangely opened his heart, creating in his mind most awful and tremendous thoughts & Ideas of the Divine Majesty, with a delightful contemplation of the Divine Nature & Attributes, and of the loveliness of Religion and Virtue. *I never* (said he) *was advanced thus far towards happiness in my life before, tho upon the commissions of some sins extraordinary I have had some checks and warnings considerable from within, but still struggled with them; and wore them off again.* The most observable that I remember was this: *One day at an Atheistical Meeting, at a person of Qualities I undertook to manage the Cause, and be the principal Disputant against God and piety, and for my performances received the applause of the whole company; upon which my mind was terribly struck, and I immediately reply'd thus to my self. Good God! that a Man, that walks upright, that sees the wonderful works of God, and has the use of his senses and reason, should use them to the defying of his Creator! But tho this was a good beginning towards my Conversion, to find my Conscience to*

for my sins, yet it went off again; nay, all my life long I had a secret value and reverence for s *honest man, and lov'd Morality in others. But I had form'd an odd Scheme of Religion to* y *self, which would solve all that God or Conscience might force upon me; yet I was not ever* ell *reconciled to the busines of Christianity, nor had that reverence for the Gospel of Christ as* ought *to have.* Which estate of mind continued, till the 53d. Chapter of *Isaiah* was read him, (wherein there is a lively description of the Sufferings of our Saviour, and the nefits thereof,) and some other portions of Scripture; by the power and efficacy of hich word, assisted by his holy Spirit, God so wrought upon his heart, that he de- ar'd that *the misteries of the Passion appeared so clear and plain to him, as ever any thing* d *that was represented in a glass*; so that that joy and admiration, which possess'd his soul on the reading Gods Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had so uch delight in his Testimonies, that in my absence he begg'd his Mother and Lady read the same to him frequently, and was unsatisfied (notwithstanding his great pains d weakness) till he had learn'd especially the 53. of *Isaiah* without book.

At the same time, discoursing of his manner of life from his youth up, and which all en knew was too too much devoted to the *service of sin*, and that the *lusts of the flesh*, *the eye*, *and the pride of life* had captivated him: He was very large and particular his acknowledgments about it, more ready to accuse himself then I or any one else can publicly crying out, *O Blessed God, can such an horrid Creature as I am be accepted by thee, o has deny'd thy Being, and contemn'd thy Power?* asking often, *Can there be mercy & par- n for me? Will God own such a Wretch as I?* and in the middle of his sickness said, *shall unspeakable joys of Heaven be confer'd on me? O Mighty Saviour! never but through thine inite Love and Satisfaction! O never but by the purchase of thy Bloud!* adding, *That with abhorrency he did reflect upon his former life; that sincerely and from his heart he did repent ll that folly and madness which he had committed.*

Indeed he had a true and lively sense of Gods great mercy to him in striking his hard art, and laying his Conscience open, which hitherto was deaf to all Gods calls and thods; saying, *if that God, who died for great as well as lesser sinners, did not speedily ap- his infinite merits to his poor soul, his wound was such as no man could conceive or bear*, ing out, *that he was the vilest Wretch and Dog that the Sun shined upon, or the earth bore. now he saw his error in not living up to that Reason which God endued him with, and ich he unworthily vilify'd and contemn'd*; wish'd he *had been a starving Leper crawling a ditch*, that he *had been a Link-boy or a Begger, or for* his *whole life time confin'd to a geon, rather then thus to have sinn'd against his God.*

How remarkable was his Faith, in a hearty embracing and devout confession of all Articles of our Christian Religon, and all the Divine misteries of the Gos- ? saying, that *that absurd and foolish Philosophy, which the world so much admired, pagated by the late Mr.* Hobbes, *and others, had undone him and many more, of the best rs in the Nation*; who without Gods great mercy to them, may never, I believe, in such a Repentance.

must not omit to mention his faithful adherance to, & casting himself entirely upon, mercies of Jesus Christ, and the free grace of God, declared to repenting sinners ough him; with a thankful remembrance of his Life, Death, and Resurrection; begging d *to strengthen his faith*, and often crying out, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

His

His mighty love and esteem of the holy Scriptures, his resolutions to read them f
quently, and meditate upon them if God should spare him, having already tasted
good Word: for having spoken to his heart he acknowledged, *all the seeming absur*
ties and contradictions therof, fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were van
ed, and the excellency and beauty appeared, being come to receive the truth in the love of it.

His extaordinary fervent Devotions, in his frequent Prayers of his own, most excell
and correct; amongst the rest, for the King, in such a manner as became a dutiful s
ject and a truly grateful Servant, for the Church and Nation, for some particular Rel
ons, and then for all Men; his cailing frequently upon me at all hours to pray with h
or read the Scriptures to him; and towards the end of his sickness would heartily de
God to pardon his infirmities, if he should not be so wakeful and intent through the whole a
as he wished to be; and that *tho the flesh was weak yet the spirit was willing, and hoped*
would accept that.

His continual invocation of Gods grace, and holy Spirit to sustain him, to keep h
from all evil thoughts, from all temptations and Diabolical suggestions, and every th
which might be prejudicial to that religious temper of mind, which God had now
happily endued him withall, crying out, one night especially, *how terribly the Tempter*
assault him, by casting upon him lewd and wicked imaginations, but I thank God (said he)
abhor them all, and by the power of his grace, which I am sure is sufficient for me, I have o
come them; tis the malice of the Devil, because I am rescu'd from him; and the goodness of
that frees me from all my spiritual enemies.

His great joy at his Ladies conversion from Popery to the Church of *England* (be
as he tearm'd it, *A faction supported only by Fraud and Cruelty,*) which was by her d
with deliberation and mature judgment; the dark mists of which have for some mo
before been breaking away, but now cleared, by her receiving the blessed Sacram
with her dying Husband, at the receiving of which no man could express more joy
devotion than he did; and having handled the word of life, and seen the salvation
God, in the preparation of his mind, he was now ready *to depart in peace.*

His hearty concern for the pious Education of his Children, wishing that his *Son* m
never be a Wit, that is, (as he himself explain'd it,) *one of those wretched Creatures, who p*
themselves in abusing God and Religion, denying his Being, or his Providence, but that he m
become an Honest and Religious man, which could only be the support and blessing of his Fa
ly; complaining *what a vicious and naughty world they were brought into*, and that *no*
unes or Honours were comparable to the Love and Favour of God to them, in whose Nam
blessed them, pray'd for 'em, and committed them to his Protection.

His strict charge to those persons, in whose custody his Papers were, *to burn all*
profane and lewd Writings, as being only fit to promote Vice and Immorality, by which he
so highly offended God, and shamed and blaspheme that Holy Religion into which he had
Baptiz'd; *& all his obscene and filthy Pictures, which were so notoriously scandalous.*

His readiness to make restitution to the utmost of his power to all persons whom
had injur'd; and for those whom he could not make a compensation to, he pra
for Gods, and their pardons. His remarkable justice in taking all possible care for the p
ment of his debts, which, before, he confessed he had not so fairly and effectually d

His readiness to forgive all Injuries done against him, some more particulary mentio
which were great and provoking; nay annexing thereto all the assurance of a fu
friendship, and hoping he should be as freely forgiven at the hand of God.

How tender and concern'd was he for his Servants about him in his extremities (manifested by the beneficence of his Will to them,) pitying their troubles in watching with him, and attending him, treating them with candor and kindness, as if they had been his Intimates!

How hearty were his endeavours to be serviceable to those about him, exhorting them *to the fear and love of God, and to make a good use of his forbearance and long-suffering to sinners, which should lead them to repentance*; And here I must not pass by his pious and most passionate exclamation to a Gentleman of some character, who came to visit him on his Death-bed: *O Remember that you contemn God no more, He is an avenging God, & will visit you for your sins; will in mercy, I hope, touch your conscience sooner or latter as he has done mine; You and I have been Friends and Sinners together a great while, therefore I am more free with you; We have been all mistaken in our conceits and opinions; our perswasions have been false and groundless, therefore God grant you repentance.* And seeing him the next day again, he said to him, *Perhaps you were disobliged by my plainess to you yesterday; take the words of truth and soberness to you*, and (stricking his hand upon his breast) said, *I hope God will touch your heart.*

Likewise his Commands to me, *to preach abroad and to let all men know* (if they knew not already,) *how severely God had disciplin'd him for his sins by his afflicting hand; that his scourings were most just, tho he had laid Ten thousand times more upon him; how he had laid stripe upon another because of his grievous provocattions, till he had brought him home to himself; that in his former visitations he had not that blessed effect he was now sensible of*, He *formerly loose thoughts and slight resolutions of reforming, and design'd to be better, because not the present consequences of sin were still pestering* him *and were so troublesome and inconvenient to* him; *but that now* he had *other sentiments of things, and acted upon other principles.* His willingness to dye, if it pleased God, *resigning himself always to the Divine disposal if God should spare* him *yet a longer time here*, he *hoped to bring glory to the name of God the whole course of his life, and particularly by his endeavours to convince others, and to assure them of the danger of their condition, if they continued impenitent; and how graciously God had dealt with* him.

His great sense of his obligations to those excellent men, the Right Reverend my Lord Bishop of *Oxford*, and Dr. *Marshal*, for their charitable and frequent Visits to him, and Prayers with him; and Dr. *Burnet*, who came on purpose from *London* to see him, who were, all very serviceable to his Repentance.

His extraordinary duty and reverence to his Mother, with all the grateful respects to her imaginable, and kindness to his good Lady, beyond expression, (which may well enhance such a loss to them,) and to his Children, obliging them with all the endearments that a good Husband or a tender Father could bestow.

To conclude these Remarks, I shall only read to you his dying Remomstrance, sufficiently attested and sign'd by his own hand, as his truest sense, (which I hope may be useful for that good end he design'd it,) in manner and form following.

For the benefit of all those whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last Declaration, which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be

That

That from the bottom of my Soul I detest and abhor the whole course of my former wicked life; that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious Opinions and vile Practices, by which I have hitherto lived without Hope, and without God in the world; have been an open Enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the holy Spirit of grace. And that the greatest testimony of my Charity such, it to warn 'em in the Name of God, and as they regard the welfare of their Immortal Souls, no more to deny his Being, or his Providence, or despise his Goodness; no more to make a mock of Sin, or contemn the pure and excellent Religion of my ever Blessed Redeemer, whose Merits alone, I, one of the Greatest of Sinners, do yet hope for Mercy and Forgiveness. Amen.

Declared and Sign'd in the presence of
ANNE ROCHESTER. *J. ROCHESTER.*
Robert Parsons. *June* 19 1680.

And now I cannot but mention with joy and admiration that steddy temper of mind, which he enjoy'd through the whole course of his sickness and Repentance; which must proceed not from a hurry and perturbation of mind or body, arising from the fear of Death, or dread of Hell only, but from an ingenious love to God, and an uniform regard to Virtue, (suitable to that solemn declaration of his, *I would not commit the least sin to gain a Kingdom,*) with all possible symptoms of a lasting perseverance in it, if God should have restored him. To which may be added his comfortable perswasions of God's accepting him to his mercy, saying three or four days before his death, *I shall depart. But Oh, what unspeakable glories do I see! what joys, beyond thought or expression, am I sensible of! I am assured of Gods mercy to me through Jesus Christ. Oh how I long to die and to be with my Saviour!*

The time of his Sickness and Repentance was just nine weeks; in all which time he was so much master of his reason, and had so clear an understanding, (saving 30 hours about the middle of it, in which he was delirous,) that he never dictated or spoke more composed in his life: and therefore if any shall cotinue to say, his Piety was the effect of madness or vapours; let me tell them, 'tis highly disingenious, and that the assertion as silly as it is wicked. And moreover that the force of what I have delivered may not be evaded by wicked men, who are resolv'd to harden their hearts maugre all Convictions, by saying, *This thing was done in a corner*, I appeal, for the truth thereof, to those sorts of persons who in considerable numbers visited and attended him, and more particulary to those eminent Physicians who were near him, and conversant with him in the whole course of his tedious sickness; and who, if any, are competent judges of a Phrensy or *delirium*.

There are many more excellent things in my absence which have occasionally dropt from his mouth, that will not come within the narrow compass of a Sermon; these, I hope will sufficiently prove what I produce them for. And if any shall be still unsatisfied here in io this hard-hearted generation, it matters not, let them at their cost be Unbelievers still, so long as this Excellent Penitent enjoys the comfort of his Repentance. And now from all these admirable signs we have great reason to believe comfortably, that his Repentance was real, and his End happy; and accordingly imitate the neighbours and Colens of *Elizabeth*, (*Luk.* 1. 58.) who, *when they heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her, came and rejoyced with her,*

For ſo we muſt learn, like the Ambaſſadors to ſome new Prince, to turn our con dolances into congratulations, in conformity to a heavenly example; *For there is jo in heaven over one Sinner that repents:*

1. A joy to *God the Father*, who has ſolemnly ſworn, that he *delights not in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould repent and live; who would have all men to be ſaved, & come to the knowledge of the truth.*

2. A joy to *God the Son*, that good ſhepherd, mention'd in the verſe before my Text, who *left the ninety and nine* juſt perſons *in the wilderneſs, and went after that which was loſt, till he had found it; and when he had found it, he laid it on his ſhoulders rejoyceing; and when he cometh home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours* (on heaven and earth) *ſaying unto them, Rejoyce with me, for I have found my ſheep which was loſt.*

3. A joy *to God the Holy Ghoſt*, after he had been ſo often *griev'd*, ſo *deſpitefully treated*, and ſo long *reſiſted.*

And 4. a joy to the whole Court of Heaven *in the preſence of the holy Angels*, v. 10. thoſe *miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter to thoſe who ſhould be heirs of ſalvation*: to ſee that now at laſt *their labour is not in vain in the Lord*, but that there is one more ſubject gained to the obedience of their and our common Lord, deliver'd from the ſlavery, and admitted to fill up the vacancy of Apoſtate Spirits.

And as our πολίτευμα, our proper or natural Citizenſhip or *converſation is in heaven*; ſhould our joys too be conformable to thoſe of our fellow-citizens. And therefore after the Relations and friends of this great Perſon have paid their natural tribute of tears to ſo near a relation, they ſhould then turn their ſorrows into joys, by the comfortable conſideration of his being a Penitent upon earth, and a Saint in heaven.

1. Thus his dear Mother ſhould rejoyce, that the Son of her love and of her fears, as well as her bowels, is now born again into a better world; adopted by his heavenly Father, and gone before her to take poſſeſſion of an eternal inheritance.

2. His truly loveing Conſort ſhould rejoyce, that God has been ſo gracious to them both, as at the ſame time to give him a ſight of his errors in point of Practice, and her ſelf (not altogether without his means & endeavours) a ſight of hers in point of Faith. And eſpecially, conſidering the great prejudices & dangers of the *Roman* Religion, I think I may aſſure that there is joy in heaven, & ſhould be on earth, for Her converſion, as well as His.

3. His Noble and moſt hopeful Iſſue ſhould rejoyce, as their years are capable; not only that a dear and loving Father has left them, but that ſince he muſt leave them, he has left them the example of a Penitent, and not of a Sinner; the Bleſſing of a Saint, in recommending them to an All-ſufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal curſe that attends the poſterity of the wicked and impenitent.

4. All good men ſhould rejoyce, to ſee the triumphs of the Croſs in theſe latter days, and the words of divine wiſdom and power. And bad men certainly, when they conſider it, are moſt of all concern'd to joy and rejoyce in it; as a condemn'd malefactor is to hear that a fellow-criminal has got his pardon, and that he may do ſo if he ſpeedily ſue for it.

And this joy of all will ſtill be the greater, if we compare it with the joy there is the caſe of Juſt perſons, that need no Repentance, *viz.* that need not ſuch a ſo extraordinary Repentance, or the whole change of heart and mind, as great ſinners do: and of this my Text pronounces, that there is *greater joy in heaven over*

one such *sinner that* truly *repenteth*, *than there is over ninety & nine just persons that need* such *a repentance*. And the reason we may conceive to be this; that since all Joy arises fro Admiration and Surprize, as from something that is new and unexpected: accordin ly the joy that proceeds from the repentance & new life of a notorious sinner, must nec be greater then that which rises from the constant piety of a good man, which we h seen every day: as a resurrection from the dead is more remarkable then our first l Besides, that such a Penitents former failings, are ordinarily the occasion of a grea and more active piety afterwards; as our Convert earnestly wisht, *That God would pleased to spare him but one year more, that in that he might honour his Name proportiona to the dishonour done to God in his whole life past.* And we see St. *Paul laboured m abundantly* than all the Apostles in the planting of the Church, because he had ra most furiously before in the destruction of it; and our Saviour himself tells us, tha *whom much is forgiven they will love much, but to whom little is forgiven they will l little*; and we know, a Commander will love a Soldier more that redeems his f mer cowardise, by doing some brave and daring action, then him, who never h that taint upon him, but yet never atchieved any thing remarkable. A husba man more rejoyces at the improvement of briars and thorns into an excellent cr from which once he had but little expectation; than for such a soil as was remar ble neither for the one or the other.

Tis certainly the more safe, indeed the only safe way to be constantly virtuous, he that is wise indeed, i. e. *wise unto salvation*, will endeavour to be one of those *need no repentance*; I mean that entire and whole work of beginning a new, but will d out the same thred through his whole life, and not let the Sun go down upon a his sins; but then the other repentance is the more remarkable, and where it is real more effectual, to produce a fervent and a fruitful piety; besides the greater glory God in the influence of the example. Which may probably be a farther reason of excessive joy of Angels at the conversion of such a Sinner; because they, who are ter acquainted with humane nature than we; and knowing it apt, like the Pharises demand a sign from heaven, for the reformation of corrupted customs; they disc too, that such desperare spiritual recoveries, will seem so many openings of the heav in the descent of the holy Dove, visibly to the standers by; and accordingly will the greater influence upon them. And tis this in the last place, that I am to rec mend to all that hear me this day.

And having thus discharg'd the office of an Historian, in a faithful representatio the repentance and conversion of this great Sinner give me leave now to bespeak as an Ambassador of Christ, and in his name earnestly *perswade you to be reconcil him*, and to follow this Illustrious persons, not in his *Sins* any more, but in his for for them, and his forsaking them. *I* hope better things of you, my brethren, the think that all that now hear me, have need of such a repentance, tho all have nee some, and the best are most sensible of it. But if there be any in this place, or elsew who have been drawn into a complacency or practice of any kind of sin from his exa let the se especially be perswaded *to break off their sins by repentance*, by the same exam that as he has been *for the fall*, so he may be now *for the rising again of many in Israel*; knows there are to many that are wise enough to discern & follow the examples of but to do good from those examples; they have no power; like those absurd flatterers

ead of, who could imitate *Plato* in his crookedneſs, *Ariſtotle* in his ſtammering, & *Alexander* the great in the bending of his neck & ſhrilneſs of his voice, but either could not or would not imitate them in any of their perfections; or like to thoſe bad ſtomachs, that delight in dirt & charcoal, but naufeate ſavory & wholſome food. Such as theſe I would beſeech, in their cooler ſeaſons, to ask themſelves that queſtion, *What fruit had you in thoſe things whereof you are now aſhamed, for the end of theſe things is death?* And if any incourage themſelves in their wickedneſs from this example, reſolving however to enjoy the good things that are preſent; *to fill themſelves with coſtly wines, and to let no part of pleaſure paſs by them* untaſted, ſuppoſing with the Goſpel rich man that when *one comes to them from the dead*, when Sickneſs or old Age, approaches that then *they will repent*; let ſuch as theſe conſider the dreadful hazard they run by ſuch pernicious counſels. It may be (and it is but juſt with God it ſhould be) that whilſt they are making *proviſions for the fleſh to fulfil the Luſts thereof*, and are ſaying to their ſouls, *Soul thou haſt much goods laid up for many years*, therefore *take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry*; perhaps juſt then at the ſame time the hand of God may be writing upon the Walls of their habitations that fatal ſentence, *Thou fool this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee, and then whoſe ſhall all thoſe things be, which thou haſt provided?* And what ſad reflections muſt ſuch a one needs make upon his own folly, when he ſees that all that mirth and eaſe, which he has promiſed himſelf for ſo many years, muſt be at an end in a very few hours? and not only ſo, but that mirth turn'd into howlings, and that eaſe into a bed of flames; when the ſoul muſt be torn away on a ſudden from the things it loved, & go where it will hate to live, & yet cannot die. And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the *things which belong to our everlaſting peace*, before *they are hid from our eies?* Were it not better for us all to be wiſe betimes by preventing ſuch a danger, then to open our eies, as the unhappy rich man of old, when we are in the place of torment?

Be perſwaded then with humble, penitent and obedient hearts to go out of your ſelves and meet the bleſſed *Jeſus*, who is now on the way, and comes to us in the diſtreſſon and in the bowels of a Saviour. woing us to accept thoſe eaſie conditions of peace and heaven offer'd in his holy Goſpel, rather then to ſtay till he become our Adverſary and our Judge too, when he will *deliver us over to the tormentors, till we have paid the uttermoſt farthing*, i. e. to all eternity: when thoſe who have made a mock at ſin all their lives, and laugh'd at the pretended cheats of Religion and its Prieſts, ſhall find themſelves at laſt the greateſt fools, and the moſt ſadly cheated in the world; for God will then *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh, when it cometh as deſolation, and their deſtruction as a whirlwind*. And ſince they would not ſuffer his Mercy to rejoice over his Juſtice, nor cauſe any joy in heaven, as the Text mentions, in their converſion; his Juſtice will certainly rejoice over his mercy, and cauſe joy in heaven (as it need at the fall of *Babylon*, which *would not be cured*, *Rev.* 19. 1.) in their confuſion. And O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would conſider this betimes. that in the midſt of their carnal jollities they would but vouchafe one regard to what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the end of theſe things.

For however the fruits of ſin may ſeem *pleaſant to the eie and to be deſired, to make one wiſe* and witty to the world; yet alas, they are all but empty and unſatisfactory at preſent, and leave a mortal ſting behind them, and *bitterneſs in the end* like the book St.

John

John ate, (Rev. 10. 10.) *which in his mouth was sweet as honey, but as soon as he had eaten it, his belly was bitter.* And tho God should please at last to bring men back in their old age from their sinful courses, by a *way of weeping*: to pluck them as *fire-brands* out of *everlasting burnings*; yet if men consider how rare and difficult a thing it is to be *born again when one is old*, how many pangs and violences to nature there must needs be, to put off the habits and inclinations to old sins: as difficult (saith the Prophet) *as for the Leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin*; and then when that's done, what scars and weakness even a Cure must leave behind; I say, he that duly considers this, will think it better to secure his salvation, and all his present true comforts, by preserving his innocency, or alleviating his work by a daily repentance for lesser failings, then to venture upon one single chance of a Death-bed repentance; which is no more to be depended upon, for the performance, or acceptance, then it can encourage any man not to labour, because *Elias* was fed by Ravens, or the Israelites with Manna from heaven.

If then there be any (tho alas that need not be asked) that have made the greatness of their wit, or birth, or fortune, *instruments of iniquity to iniquity*; let them now convert them, in their own conversion, to that original noble use for which God intended them, *viz.* to be *instruments of righteousness unto holiness.*

To these especially that are thus great, not only God, but this great Person also, by my mouth, *being dead yet speaketh*; for as St. *Paul* seem'd more especially concern'd for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh; and even the rich man in hell, tho sufficiently distracted by his own sufferings, yet seems hugely desirous that one might be sent from the dead to his brethren, that he might *testifie unto them, lest they also come into that place of torment*: So this illustrious Convert, after God had open'd his eyes to see his follies, was more especially desirous of the salvation of those that were his brethren, tho not in the flesh, yet in the greatness of their quality, & of their sins; passionately wishing, *that all such, were not only almost, but altogether such as he now was*, saving his bodily afflictions; and of great force, methinks, should the admonitions of a dying friend be. The ingenious *Michael de Montaigne* reckons him the best Physician, who himself had the disease which he pretends to cure; and behold a greater than he says to *Peter, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*; which assures us, that they who have themselves been in a condition to need a remarkable conversion, are not incapacitated thereby, but obliged, and the better qualified for such a charitable work.

Now these especially I would beseech, as the Minister of Christ, and as such, *tho we are reviled we bless, tho we are defamed we intreat*, to *suffer the word of Exhortation*; that they would not terminate their eyes upon the outward pomp and pageantry that attends them, as the vulgar Jews did upon their Rites and Ceremonies; but (as the wise Israelites, who esteem'd those glittering formalities as the Types and Images of heavenly things,) be quickened by them to the ambition of original honours, and future glory. How much were it to be wish'd, that such persons especially would be followers of God and goodness, since whether they will or no men will be followers of them; all of them according to their respective magnitudes, like Stars, casting a good or bad influence upon their inferiors, and not only so, but oftentimes upon their superiors too; as corrupt blood in the feet, in the course of its circulation, after some time passes upward into the head.

It is true, an eminent ſtation is liable to ſeveral miſchiefs, from which a mean condi-
on is free; but the God of order, who has made dignity in place, and affluence of
ches neceſſary to the world, has proportion'd his ſupports: and if the incitements to
do abound unto the rich and noble, *the grace of God*, if they are careful to improve it,
ll much more abound, both to Gods glory and their own. Thus if the temptations of
eat perſons be more, and greater, than thoſe of inferiors; their abilities and under-
ndings are ordinarily greater too: & if they lie more open to the aſſaults of the Devil,
ey have generally greater ſagacities to foreſee the danger, & more powerful aſſiſtances
go through it. Nor is Piety inconſiſtent with greatneſs, any more than it is with Po-
y, but is the beſt foundation and ſecurity both to the one and the other. The breeding
Moſes at Court, without doubt contributed much even to his Religious performances,
leaſt ſo far, as to make them more uſeful and exemplary to others: but then he was
cerely virtuous all the while, as well whilſt reputed the Son of *Pharaoh*'s daughter,
Jethro's Son in law. The Prophet *Iſaiah* was Nephew to a King, and bred, as is
oppoſed in the Court; whence we may obſerve his ſtyle is more majeſtick than
other Prophets; as that of the great Doctor of the Gentiles, who was bred at the
t of *Gamaliel*, is than the other Apoſtles; God making uſe of the natural tempers and
ucations of men, to be aſſiſting to ſupernatural purpoſes.

We find Chriſtians in *Ceſar*'s houſhold as ſoon as any where elſe in *Rome*; and when
riſtianity had once gain'd *Conſtantine*, it ſpred it ſelf farther over the Empire in a few
rs, than before it had done in ſome Centuries: as waters running downwards ſpred
mſelves freer, then when forced upwards againſt nature. Since then ſo much miſ-
ief depends upon illuſtrious examples, will it not better become men to draw the
ltitude after them to heaven, by their piety, than by infectious guilts be at the head
a miſerable company of the Damn'd?

'Tis this piety, a timely and an exemplary piety, that will perpetuate to men of birth
d fortunes, their Honors, and their Eſtates too, as well by deriving on them the bleſ-
g of God, who is the true fountain of honor; as by creating an aw and a reverence
them from all orders of men, even to many generations; a reverence which will
freſh and laſting, when all the trophies of wit and gaity are laid in the duſt. 'Tis
piety that will be the guide of their youth, and the comfort of their age; for *length
days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.* 'Tis this, and this
ly, that can make all outward bleſſings comfortable, and indeed bleſſings to us, by
king them the ſteps and means of attaining the never fading honors and incompre-
ſible glories of that Kingdom which is above; where there ſhall be no more ſin,
ſickneſs, nor pain, nor tears, nor death, but we ſhall reſt from our labours, and our
rks ſhall follow us.

Unto which God of his infinite mercy bring us, for the merits and for the mediation
Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us aſcribe
Praiſe and Adoration, now and for ever. *Amen.*

THE END.